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The Moorish Science Temple of America: A Study Exploring the Foundations of African American Islamic Thought and Culture

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Abstract
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One of the reasons religious studies is important to the academic process is because it seeks to understand the intricacies of well known human systems of meaning. Also important is research on those religious systems not well known. Herein lies the purpose of this dissertation, to exam a religious movement within the African American community, which has not received the academic attention it deserves, the Moorish Science Temple of America, Inc. (MSTA). Therefore, the primary thesis for this dissertation: to expand the current study of African American Islam to include the intricacies of the movement and organization of the MSTA through attention to primary materials and secondary literature.
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and thank my parents, who always taught me the value of education. Next, I must mention my mentor Dr. Anthony Pinn, his patience is the reason I am still here. To all of my family and friends: Luther, D’LO, Henry, Alice, Joshua, Roxanna, Diane, Malachi, Wayland, Leah, Tamara, Serie, Will, Rob, Kaelyn, Yeshua and those yet to come to this world. Last, to the ancestors of all of humanity we are the reflection of our most primordial efforts.
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Introduction

This dissertation is an investigation into an understudied tradition in African American Religious Studies. Specifically, this project examines the philosophical thought\(^1\) and religious culture of the Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA). Throughout this dissertation, it will be demonstrated that Noble Drew Ali, through his organization, provided a unique understanding of what it means to be “Black” (of African descent) in the world. To put it another way, the MSTA was created by Ali to give Africans in America a greater sense of self-worth through an alternate understanding of history (Moorish origins) and ethos (the collective cultural consciousness or personality of the Moors). In this dissertation, I am primarily concerned with how the Moors have created, celebrated, sustained and developed themselves as an organization and how this has contributed to the development of alternate religious expressions.

This introduction will direct the focus for the rest of the dissertation. First, this chapter will introduce Noble Drew Ali and the Moorish Science Temple of America by discussing the early history and folklore of the movement. Second, I will discuss how the culture of the MSTA will be framed from a congregational perspective. Third, the methodological approach towards the MSTA will be outlined. This approach will focus on the symbolic significance of the Moors, as it is my argument that the MSTA redefined itself through signification.

\(^1\) Kwame Gyekye. *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 13. Kwame Gyekye argues, “African philosophical thought is expressed both in the oral literature and in the thoughts and actions of the people. Thus, a great deal of philosophical material is embedded in the proverbs, myths and folktales, folk songs, rituals, beliefs, customs and traditions of the people, in their art symbols and in their sociopolitical institutions and practices.”
Ali's Nobility

The early history and folklore of Timothy Drew will be the starting point for this investigation of Noble Drew Ali and the MSTRA. Focused as it is around the folklore of Timothy Drew, Ali's history is somewhat difficult to reconstruct. Susan Nance states, "Like many prophets before him, Noble Drew Ali shrouded his early life in mystery. As a result, we are now left to piece together the years before his 1925 appearance in Chicago, largely from oral history provided by his followers." Because of this, it will be critical to understand the important role symbolism plays, as the focus will be on the folklore surrounding Ali. This section will also deal with the early growth of the Moorish movement and ultimately the transition of Ali's life (his passing) and the symbolic significance of claims regarding his reincarnation.

It is speculated, Ali's story starts in North Carolina on a Cherokee reservation in rural Simpsonbuck County in 1886. However, it has been observed by Michael Gomez, author of Black Crescent, that this county does not and never did exist in North Carolina,

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3 Ibid., 54. The author interestingly used the word "probably" when referring to the birth of Timothy Drew. Her aim was to highlight the fact that Ali's early life is an unverifiable mystery. She states, "January 8 may not be Ali's true birth date; however, it is the day on which Moorish Americans have been celebrating his birth since the late 1920s." Moorish-American Voice (Vol. 2, No. 6; Dec. 1992 / Jan. 1993), 1. The celebrating of January 8, is a tradition that still lives on. The head line for the Moorish American Voice in January 1993 reads, "Moorish Holiday Greetings." Also, there was a special holiday message for members which read, "With much love and esteem for the Holy Prophet Noble Drew Ali, the Moors should celebrate the day on January 8 with programs in honor of the Prophet Noble Drew Ali, with feasting, and an exchange of presents. Let us manifest the love that the Holy Prophet taught us, by imitating the Prophet in divine love."
which adds to the continuing lore of Ali and the Moorish Science Temple of America. The term lore is used in the context of Ali’s early life because, while there are very few verifiable facts, there is much in the way of mythology. According to the biography on Noble Drew Ali, *Exhuming a Nation* by Elihu Pleasant-Bey (current member of the MSTCA), Ali was born to an ex-slave father and a mother who was part Cherokee and part Moorish. Pleasant-Bey claims Ali was raised by Cherokees until 1892, when he and his mother moved to Newark, New Jersey to live with his aunt. Not long after they relocated, his mother passed away; with his father nowhere to be found Ali stayed under the guardianship of his aunt. According to Pleasant-Bey, and for reasons unknown, his aunt was very abusive. Pleasant-Bey asserts, Ali’s aunt tried to stuff him into a burning stove, an encounter that scarred him severely. Also according to Moorish lore, Allah protected Ali from being killed but he (Allah) left scars on Ali’s body to prove his humanity to future generations who would encounter him.

In juxtaposition to this history, Michael Gomez verifies the difficulty with Ali’s childhood but offers a significant lead via Ali’s father, who may have been initiated into Jamal al-Din al-Afghani’s political reform movement called Salafiyya. But this is still

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6 Ibid., 3.
7 Ibid., 3.
8 Michael Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 205. Peter Lamborn Wilson, *Sacred Drift: Essays on the Margins of Islam*, (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1993), 16. “Drew’s father was said to have been from Moorish extraction, his mother from Cherokee ancestry. By the early 1880’s... the Drew family had settled
speculation. According to the biographical information presented by Elihu Pleasant-Bey, the rest of Ali’s childhood was spent as an orphan traveling around with a group of gypsies during which time he is reported to have learned magic and the power of levitation.9 “From the very outset, young Timothy Drew showed unusual powers in controlling unseen ethers and spirits. By the age of 12, he made objects move with thought and could levitate his body. These gifts were considered ‘magic’ and somehow ended with Timothy joining a traveling circus band of gypsies.”10 At the age of sixteen, Ali’s abilities caught the attention of a gypsy woman who took him to Egypt to study in the Essene schools, which are the schools of the ancient Egyptian mystery system.

Studying at the Essene schools was a necessary process Ali needed to go through before establishing the MSTA because these schools are supposedly the institutions where the great prophets and thinkers of the ancient world studied. According to Clifton Marsh in the text *From Black Muslims to Muslims: The Resurrection, Transformation, and Change of the Lost-Found Nation of Islam in America, 1930-1995*, during his education, he underwent a kind of test to display his knowledge of the ancient Egyptian (Kemetic) mysteries and thus prove he was a prophet of Allah. As Marsh recounts,

According to the legend of the movement, Timothy Drew made a pilgrimage to North Africa ‘where he received a mission from the King of Morocco to teach Islam to the Negroes in the United States.’ Drew had to pass a test to prove he was the prophet of Allah. The test involved the pyramids of Egypt, in which Drew was allegedly released inside and had

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10 Ibid., 4.
to find his way out. Drew ‘mastered the pyramids and they knew he was the prophet; he came back to the Temple in Newark in 1913.’

Pleasant-Bey provides a very similar rendition, observing “a circle of Egyptian Adepts who were also convened by a Guru from Punjab, India recognized Timothy Drew… [he] was taken blindfolded into the great pyramid of Cheops and left unattended to find his way or perish. Later that same day, he appeared from the sands, between the paws of the Sphinx.” Upon completion of this test, Ali was initiated into an ancient and sacred order of Egypt and given permission to teach the knowledge of the sacred order to African Americans of the United States.

These legends of Ali seem to provide the prophet with the necessary back-story to get a desired effect from would-be followers, the effect being the legitimacy of his claim to ancient nobility. Nance argues, “Ali’s own story of pilgrimage to Morocco to obtain his commission to spread Islam in the Unites States also gave him legitimacy through an appropriation of Arab culture and reference to blacks awareness of similar stories of spiritual travel in the East.” It is much more impressive from the perspective of a prospective member, who may have recently traveled from the rural American South, for one's spiritual leader to have brought ancient wisdom from far off almost imaginary places while dressed in colorful garb seen only in newspaper clippings. This is the only

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important truth of Ali’s early life. That is to say, the stories of Ali’s early life are probably not true, but that is not as intriguing as the impact that his story had and still has on his followers, because it speaks to the collective imagination of a group of people. In their minds, they share in this heritage provided by Ali, through which they became and remain an ancient people with rich culture and deep wisdom. Ali in effect, through the creation of his own image, created a symbol of divinity African Americans could appropriate and make their own. Ali’s divinity is Moorish divinity, a legacy they share in as members of the MST.

According to Richard Turner and Michael Gomez, from 1902 until about 1910 Ali traveled back and forth between the United States, Morocco, Egypt and Saudi Arabia as a merchant seaman receiving education and training from prophets, sages and sheikhs of Islam. During that period, Ali was endowed with the title “Noble” and given a charter to teach Islam in the United States by the Adepts of the Essene schools. This is consistent with the claims made by Pleasant-Bey, though he argues Ali’s arrival in the United States came two years later at the port of New York, in 1912. Disputes over chronology should not overshadow the possibility that Ali may have had international

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exposure at a relatively young age. Moreover, according to Turner, when Ali returned in 1910 he joined the Prince Hall Freemasons and worked as an express man on a train, giving him further exposure to the great diversity of life in the United States.\textsuperscript{16}

Before the organization was called the Moorish Science Temple of America it was named the Canaanite Temple.\textsuperscript{17} It was founded in 1913 in Newark, New Jersey and was the first organized Muslim community in the United States.\textsuperscript{18} Within the first ten years of the organization’s history it had about 30,000 members scattered throughout many cities of the mid-west and northeast, including Detroit, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Lansing, Cleveland, Richmond and Baltimore.\textsuperscript{19} The movement was renamed the Moorish Holy Temple of Science when Ali established the organization’s Chicago headquarters in 1923. This move was caused by a split in the


\textsuperscript{17} Michael Gomez, \textit{Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 206. The significance of this name will be discussed in greater detail in chapter one.


organization that took place in 1921 supposedly between Ali and other parties. The other
group remained in Newark and renamed itself the “Holy Moabite Temple of Science.”

However, research regarding Noble Drew Ali suggests he did not arrive in
Chicago until 1925. He allegedly appeared on the streets of Chicago bearing a flaming
red fez and proclaiming the word of Allah. According to Susan Nance, this is the only
verifiable record on Ali. All other information before Chicago 1925, his birth, his travels
to the east, even the founding of the MSTA in Newark, New Jersey in 1913, is
speculation. Nance states, “The Chicago Defender first reported the belief that Ali had
proclaimed himself prophet and founded a temple of Moorish Science in Newark, New
Jersey sometime during 1913. Other than this account, we have no record of Ali’s
activities until his appearance sometime in 1925 in Chicago, though Works Progress
Administration (WPA) state-history researchers reported that when Ali arrived in
Chicago he had already established other temples in Pittsburgh and Detroit.” This adds
to the lore around Ali’s entire life, which adds further complexity to the philosophy of the
MSTA, as Ali himself seems to be somewhat of a mythological figure. Regardless of
the particular date of his arrival it is clear Ali’s presence in Chicago was known. In

20 Ibid., 33.
21 Susan B. Nance, “Moslem’s That Old Time Religion”: Moorish Science and
The Meaning of Islam in the 1920s Black Chicago. (Toronto: Simon Fraser University,
and in empty lots preaching his ideas to passers-by. Some of these men and women
stopped to listen to the prophet; some simply laughed, shook their heads at his turban and
moved on to work or home. Chicago’s streets were home to many such street preachers
and philosophers.”
22 Ibid., 58.
23 A note must be made of the similarities in the lives of Noble Drew Ali and Fard
Muhammad. Both characters have mystery surround their birth. Both are said to have
spent time in the East (in Fard’s case he was supposedly born there). Both seemed to
have materialized in mid-western cities. And there is some mystery surrounding the end
of their lives.
Chicago the Moors quickly grew, gaining diverse members from the poorest urban migrant to Chicago’s black elite. While most of Ali’s early life remains shrouded in mystery, it is only because of the stormy relationship between the Moors and the Chicago Defender that the period of Ali’s life from 1925 to 1929 offers any truly verifiable information.  

Ali transcended in 1929, leaving behind some mystery surrounding his death. Some say he died a natural death. However, it is reported, he may have been murdered by a member of a rival religious group, who was later killed by Chicago police.

Pleasant-Bey offers almost no discussion of Ali’s death in his biography in terms of causal speculation. The primary focus was on who took the reins of power after the Prophet expired. Pleasant-Bey claims the group splintered severely because of egos and greed resulting in different trajectories that may have gone against what Noble Drew Ali had in mind for the future of his organization. On this point:

Bro. Mealy El was the most trusted and qualifies of the four to resume the business of the MSTA. Yet, his pleas fell mostly on deaf ears and he

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24 Susan B. Nance, “Moslem’s That Old Time Religion”: Moorish Science and The Meaning of Islam in the 1920s Black Chicago. (Toronto: Simon Fraser University, 1996), 51. “For an aspiring religious leader like Noble Drew Ali the stakes could be very high in Chicago. The city’s religious entrepreneurs had access to a large pool of potential converts, energetic fund-raisers and missionaries who built multi-city networks of storefront assemblies around the country. Such converts came from the mainstream of black society consisting of respectable working African Americans who were attracted by Ali’s radical revisions of black history and his conception of Moorish-American identity.”

25 Ibid., 51.


28 Susan B. Nance, “Moslem’s That Old Time Religion”: Moorish Science and The Meaning of Islam in the 1920s Black Chicago. (Toronto: Simon Fraser University,
ended up virtually alone with his love from his Prophet. The other groups followed Givens-El into the first of many Reincarnated Prophets. Bro. Elijah Poole-Bey and Mohamet Farad-Bey of Arabia later organized what is known as the Nation of Islam. But the greater of the MSTA members and assets went to Bro. Charles Kirkman Bey; after the first plotted cabinet takeover during the 2nd Annual National Convention 1929, Chicago. In fact, like most Moors in the heat of power, it got bloody and lives were lost. Nevertheless, the coup yielded the official MSTA Corporation under the guise of Bro. C. Kirkman Bey and his appointed officials. ⁹

There is little proof to validate the Moors' claim that the founders of the Nation of Islam were once Moors vying for power. Yet, it has been a point of interest and speculation for some scholars. For instance, according to Clifton Marsh, almost immediately after Ali’s passing, two of his associates - John Givens El ³⁰ and Wallace D. Fard - proclaimed to be his reincarnation. The former, ³¹ Ali’s chauffeur, is said to have fainted shortly after the death of Ali and upon waking he bore the sign of the star and crescent in his eyes, which for some was proof enough that he was in fact the reincarnation of Noble Drew Ali. ³²

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1996), 60. According to the author, Ali at one time lived with Mr. and Mrs. Mealy El before he had fully established himself or the movement.


³⁰ MSTA lecture, “Time to Clean House” part 2. Speaker claims that John Givens-El put out of temple for claiming to be Allah.


³² Richard B. Turner, Islam in the African-American Experience (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 100. Michael Gomez, Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 273. Clifton E. Marsh, From Black Muslims to Muslims: The Resurrection, Transformation, and Change of the Lost-Found Nation of Islam in America, 1930-1995. (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 1996), 35. Fard’s claim however is a little different. Shortly before Ali’s death his subordinates minister and member began to exploit other members of the organization by selling herbs, magic charms, and literature on the movement. The commerce was apparently somewhat lucrative to the extent that some of ministers started to become wealthy. While it is not clear if W. D. Fard was a paying member of the MSTA, it is however clear that he went from door to door in Detroit
According to Turner, after the passing of Ali, Fard Muhammad made his proclamation of divinity then headed to Detroit. From there, the Moorish Science Temple of America reorganized itself under the leadership of C. Kirkman Bey as president and John Givens-El as the reincarnation of the prophet. And Fard selling herbs, charms and proclaiming the Moorish doctrine. It is argued by some that W. D. Fard was one of these ministers who began proselytizing to people and pebbling charms at the time of Ali’s death.


Muhammad, with the teachings of Ali, founded the Nation of Islam. This information is highly speculative as there is no way to verify Fard’s presence with Ali or the Moorish Science Temple of America, but this does signal the beginning of the NOI’s own historical claims which like the Moors have a lot of logical holes in them. Nevertheless, Ali’s story is the gateway through which this dissertation will dissect the philosophy and culture of the MSTA.

**Framing the Moors**

This dissertation offers a deeper understanding of the Moors and Ali using the sociological frame “congregation” as an interpretive device. Framing is a sociological method of categorization developed by Nancy Ammerman, et al., in the handbook *Studying Congregations*. For them, framing the most critical elements of religious institutions (ecology, culture, process and resource) provides a clear view of the tradition as a whole. They argue: “frames are deliberately abstracted and generalized intellectual tools intended to facilitate understanding… frames are intended to help the

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36 For the sake of the length of this research, the cultural frame will be the focus of this research. The other frames, ecology, process and resource, are just as important to the study of the MSTA. However, these other frames will have to be explored in future research.
reader see congregations clearly despite habits of mind that often obscure them.” 37 While framing is a general approach to viewing the structure of a congregation 38 or religious body, they are also “intended to reorient thinking in ways that we hope will be fruitful,” as well “they invite the onlooker to adopt a new stance toward what is only too familiar.” 39 Furthermore, “a culture frame asks you to imagine the congregation you are studying as a group that has invented ways of being together that are uniquely its own… Culture includes all the things a group does together – its rituals, its ways of training new comers, its work and its play.” 40 In the context of the Moors, they have created ways of being together through their understanding or interpretation of their origin, their understanding of what it means to be a Nation, their interpretation of certain religious concepts, such as “Moslem” and “Islam,” their interpretation of the Christ figure, and their use of symbols to reinforce their belief system. Hence, in light of congregational studies, the MSTAs 41 will be examined as an assembly of persons brought together for religious worship.

38 Congregations is defined as an assembly of persons brought together for common religious worship; www.dictionary.com (accessed September, 2010).
40 Ibid., 15.
41 Anthony Pinn, *Terror and Triumph: The Nature of Black Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 108-109. MSTAs is like the NOI, in that it represents a convert tradition, a term that “is not a negative assessment of [the] tradition’s importance and relevance. Rather, it is used only to denote the sheltered, protected and secretive nature of the traditions – sheltered is that the Nation of Islam’s teachings and practices were initially and explicitly geared toward a limited community in order to safeguard that community until it was prepared to fulfill its destiny, and secretive in that the teachings and symbols were, and to some extent remain, shrouded in mystery,
The MSTA has developed a theological curriculum that is not only unique ritualistically but also designed to provide unique answers to particular absurdities of African American life. To put it succinctly, this project is an investigation into the identity of the MSTA, an identity that is revealed through culture. Ammerman, et al., argue “culture is who we are and the world we have created to live in. It is a predictable pattern of who does what and habitual strategies for telling the world about the things held most dear.”42 It will be shown that the culture of the MSTA provides African Americans with a sense of purpose and meaning in the context of the absurdities of their experience.

The culture of the MSTA is not created in a vacuum. They have connected themselves to many different types of religious and spiritual expressions from across the world by claiming that they are the originators of human religion and civilization. Ammerman et al., argue congregations “do not create their cultures from scratch. They have a rather large store of ingredients from which to borrow. In some cases, they may get both the ingredients and an elaborate recipe from their specific tradition.”43 The Moors have done this with elements of Christianity, al-Islam and Freemasonry. Through

43 Ibid., 78.
an analysis of the religious elements of the MSTA the focus will be on the rituals, holy
scriptures, customs, pedagogy, myths, symbols and symbolic language.44

The authors argue congregational studies helps those within the tradition “confer
a balance and sense of proportion often absent from the spontaneous self-descriptions of
congregations.”46 Meaning, congregational studies helps outsiders understand the nature
and function of congregations, as well as clarify ambiguity for those within the tradition
that are seeking greater understanding. Again, the purpose for employing the
congregational framing method is to provide a clearer view of the cultural elements of the
MSTA that demonstrate the uniqueness of the Moorish understanding of being. These
cultural elements are symbols that constitute everything from religious icons or heroes to
language and symbolism.47 It will be demonstrated that these symbols in their various
forms have certain cultural meanings that inform the Moors about their origin and
purpose.

There are several strands of pertinent query presented by Ammerman, et al.,
which will be useful in guiding this research:

Which rituals are most predictable and central to the congregation’s
culture? Which other activities are most instrumental in shaping the
people who participate and in influencing what this group thinks of itself?

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44 Ibid., 78. “Through their educational programs congregations not only transmit
knowledge of the faith tradition and its meaning for contemporary life but also transmit
values that promote community, solidarity and continuity. Historically, congregations
have socialized youth and newcomers, sustained person in need, and provided various
rites of passage which mark significant transitions of life: birth, puberty, marriage and
death.”

45 Ibid., 78-104.
46 Ibid., 8.
47 Ibid., 78. Culture “includes… everything from buildings to bulletins from
sacred objects to the most mundane tools, helps identify a particular congregation’s
habits and places of being. Finally, culture includes the accounts it gives of itself its
stories and heroes, its symbols and myths, its jargon and its jokes.”
What symbols best describe who they are? What objects, people and events carry meanings linking them to the ideals of this group? Which routine practices and styles of relationship best capture what congregation values most? What stories are the essential myths of this people? What beliefs and ideas best describe what they think a practicing member ought to be like?  

The above query will be a guide in sifting through the complex milieu of Moorish culture. As each congregation has its own unique complexities, this framing method will help “with multiple, seemingly unrelated problems by uncovering structures or patterns.” Be it the history, rituals, customs, mores or any other elements of a congregation’s make up, this method of study will bring to light the seemingly gray areas of MSTA cultural life.

Signification and Meaning Making

It is my argument that symbols in varying forms provide shape to Moorish culture and philosophy. There are several types of symbols or symbolic phenomena that will be discussed: myths (holy scriptures, sermons), motif (attire, flag, heroes), ethics as well as history. For the MSTA, ethics become symbol through their method of presentation. For example, the five tenets of Moorish Islamism - love, truth, peace, freedom and justice - become imprinted in every facet of their being. Likewise, history becomes symbolic for the Moors through their interpretation of their origin, as they see themselves as founders of human culture.

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48 Ibid., 101.
49 Ibid., 8-9.
50 Ibid., 8-9.
51 Are certain phenomena like taboo symbols? What about love, truth, peace freedom and justice, which are the guiding principles of the tradition? What about ethical symbol of certain heroes such as Jesus, Marcus Garvey and white people in general? Also, there are ethical symbols in the Freemason tradition that will be analyzed as well.
To determine the critical value of symbol and/or symbolic language, the Dogon concept *nommo* will provide important context as this concept suggests communication (the word in all forms) carries with it power.\(^{52}\) According to Ogotommeli, a sage of the Dogon interviewed by Marcel Giruale, *nommo* is water and heat in the form of water vapor from the mouth, with it carrying the life giving properties of water and fire.\(^{53}\) Simply put, there is power in what Ali created (spoke into existence): a belief system with its own unique understanding of history and identity. This power informs the Moors’ “claim” to national identity as a free and sovereign people known as Moorish Americans. For Ogotommeli, *nommo* creates life through the imagery of spoken word.\(^{54}\) In essence, I am arguing Ali created life through the development of Moorish culture,\(^{55}\) that life being an active movement/organization.\(^{56}\)


\(^{55}\) Paul Carter Harrison, *The Drama of Nommo.* (New York: Grove Press, 1972), xix. “the rituals of secular life, invested with the spirit, receive their vigor from the power of the word, Nommo force, which activates the mode in such a way as to allow Man to conjure up an understanding of how to manipulate so much bullshit without succumbing to its odious force.”

To this point Henry Louis Gates in the text *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* argues,

When Nommo force is properly activated, man demonstrates a capacity to manipulate the forces of nature – however resistant or callous may be the mode – in a manner that would preserve him as Muntu. While the community of the dead – the ancestors – may be activated for this purpose, the problems of life fall upon the living. And as the wisdom of traditional life would have it, community is the social force that perpetuates the image of man.\(^{57}\)

For Gates, *nommo* force is what makes seemingly mundane repetitious human activities such as rituals, serious spiritual endeavors meant to manipulate the immediate local environment. What will be demonstrated in this dissertation is that the Moors have employed *nommo* force through rituals they have developed, i.e., the Moorish Prayer, and through speaking their own interpretation of history. Their telling of history becomes more than a mundane description of world events, it becomes evidence of their spiritual knowledge and presence in the ancient world. Further, knowing this history and verbalizing it becomes an exercise of power as it breaks the chains of mental enslavement by creating meaning.

Signifying is one of the most effective ways to construct epistemic definition, which allows symbolic meaning to be made through the creation of images that carry the implication of cultural conduct and customs. For Charles Long in the text *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion*, signification “constitutes the texture and network of various relationships between and among the relationships of

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cultures and peoples in the modern world." Long’s understanding of signification is focused on the relationship between the signified and signifier, a relationship that is defined and shaped by the power of meaning. To signify, therefore, is to be engaged in a power struggle for meaning. He argues, “signification represent(s) an arbitrary relationship between the signifier and the signified,” which means “the relationship could be changed, while on the other hand, the very fact that the relationship was arbitrary was the source of its terror.” Ali addressed this terror by re-signifying who African Americans are through the creation history (origin or creation myth), supported by a belief system meant to provide African Americans with an alternate identity than what was being offered by the narrative of Europeans Americans.

For Gates, the symbolic nature of language in African culture is multi-layered and dynamic, where meaning is not always immediately clear or obvious without prior cultural knowledge. Signifying in black language is “double voiced” and is also consumed with “double meaning.” This two-sided voice presents both a “formal vision and intertextual relation, between signified and signifier.” In Gates’ view, the formal vision is a “view of what is supposed to be compared to what is.” This multi-layered comparison reveals “intricacies of the relationship between signified and signifier.”

Therefore, signifying in black language accomplishes a number of tasks: first, demonstrating the ironic nature of a perceived and actual reality, particularly from the

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59 Ibid., 2.
61 Ibid., 48-52.
62 Ibid., 52.
63 Ibid., 48-52.
perspective of the oppressed. Second, the presentation of what is, provides hints for understanding the complexities of the inter-cultural relationship between groups of people without fully divulging the intricacies and details of that relationship. Lastly, acknowledgement of the intricacies of an intercultural relationship demonstrates the complex nature of human communication. To put this in the context of the MSTA, the symbols and symbolic language they use to create their history and their identity has varying levels of meaning that may escape the casual witness. For example, the concept of Islam for the Moors brings a different level of meaning relative to their identity. That is to say, they understand themselves as Islamic but not of the Islamic tradition.

To explain further, the method of meaning making is the process of organizing knowledge, which is the process of logic. Vernon Dixon provides perspective on the method of logic akin to the process of meaning making through signification in the essay, "African-Oriented and Euro-American-Oriented World Views: Research Methodologies and Economics." According to Dixon, "logic or the mode of organizing knowledge implicitly shapes the form of these assumptions and models." For him, African culture is not linear but spherical and multi-faceted where symbols, language, meaning, life and experience all intertwine in a complex tapestry of epistemological definition to inform a people who they are as well as keep their minds open to unseen possibilities.

According to Dixon, the cultural differences between peoples are based on the nature and process of gaining and organizing knowledge. He argues African logic is

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65 Ibid., 139.
66 Ibid., 122.
"Diunital," meaning two or more ways to understanding one whole.\(^{67}\) In other words, for African logic, something can be a thing and something else at the same time (and in the same way) without contradicting itself. For the Moors, Islam fits this diunital category quite neatly. Consequently, Moorish Islam is Islamic in certain respects, such as in its application of the name Allah for the primary deity. However, it is not Islamic, as it has its own identity as an African American religious tradition. Moorish Islam is a unique combination of concepts, ideas, traditions, and cultural practices from a myriad of sources. The MSTA is the product of a process of cultural maintenance and adaptation through a diunital logical reality. If we were to consider Moorish Islam from an either/or perspective,\(^{68}\) it would not be Islam because it does not fulfill certain cultural requirements, such as adherence to the five pillars of al-Islam.

This method of understanding logic as described by Dixon is also dissected in the article “Beyond Either/Or: A Philosophy of Liberation” by Lerone Bennett. Bennett states, “the either/or question of integration or separation does not speak to that proposition; for if our goal is liberation it may be necessary to do both or neither.”\(^{69}\) To unpack this in the context of this dissertation, the basic argument of Bennett is: there is more to understanding the concept of liberation than just two choices. Perhaps other avenues have not been explored. Likewise, with the MSTA, it is not enough to merely

\(^{67}\) Ibid., 139. “In contrast, overseas and homeland Africans predominantly organize what they know according to Diunital logic. I constructed the neologism Diunital in the following manner: Webster tells us that Di means ‘akin to two’ and ‘apart.’ Unital, that adjectival form of the word unit, means a ‘single that that constitutes an undivided whole.’ Diunital, therefore, is literally something apart and united at the same time.”

\(^{68}\) Ibid., 138.

understand them as ‘Islamic,’ as they have explored other avenues of what being Moslem means. That will be the function of diunital logic for this dissertation, in that many of the concepts and characters that appear in the culture of the MSTTA defy traditional meaning. We must therefore look beyond the “either/or.”

To extract the meaning the Moors present to the world I have had to understand the Moors on their own terms, with their own meaning of things. This issue will be apparent in Chapter One with the meaning of the term and concept ‘Moor.’ In Chapter Two, more complexity will be added by the Moorish understanding of what it means to be a nation of people. In Chapter Three, the Moors’ redefinition of the Christ figure will challenge the meaning of Christ’s message to the world. Also, the concepts of Islam and Moslem will be dissected. Chapter Four will explore the methods of Moorish redefinition of the craft of Freemasonry.

The diunital method of logic Dixon outlines clearly employs signifying as way of organizing knowledge. While according to Gates, “The Afro-American rhetorical strategy of Signifyin(g) is a rhetorical practice that is not engaged in the game of information giving,”70 it is, on the other hand, engaged in knowledge orientation. To signify is to make information available in a coded fashion. In this way, information is not made obvious or given up without the prior possession and comprehension of cultural knowledge. As it will be shown, this is the case for the Moors, as they have created meaning to redefine who African Americans are, but they have done so in a way that is not immediately clear to those outside the tradition.

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Providing this clarity is critical to the study of African American religion, as much of the substance of religious movements is not always presented in a simple, easily digestible manner. The MSTA is no different in this regard. It may even be a bit more complex than some mainstream religious movements as Ali pulls from a variety of sources to make his claim. As Nance argues, "Ali framed his revelation in cultural codes and styles of communication he borrowed from the black fraternal orders, black Christianity, popular representations of Islam and Eastern countries and Chicago’s alternative religions."\textsuperscript{71} Ali developed his own understanding of what it means to be of African descent in America and that understanding challenges traditional notions of (not only) what it means to be black in America (but, also) what it means to be Islamic.

For Anthony Pinn, in the text \textit{Terror and Triumph: The Nature of Black Religion}, black religion is the quest for complex subjectivity as a basic impulse or response to terror and dread, which is revealed through an investigation of raw materials.\textsuperscript{72} The query that reveals itself through Pinn’s line of logic is that if the search for meaning is a basic impulse and response to terror and dread experienced, then, what does it mean when the search for meaning gives way to the making of meaning?\textsuperscript{73} For Pinn, making meaning is done through religious institutions or movements that have historically attempted to re-order or re-conceptualize the absurd world African Americans were surrounded by in an attempt to survive, both physically and culturally. He states,


\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., xii-xiii.
religious institutions, thoughts, and actions are an attempt to rupture or break history through the assertion and securing of a full range of rights and privileges. In other words, the religious experiences we study is historically situated and culturally bound, dealing with ‘the material world of outer nature’ and ‘the human world of social life.’

In simple terms, religious institutions and movements are a basic human survival mechanism; a basic and complex response to environment stimuli. In this same continuum, Ali responded to the oppressive environment of the United States by redefining African Americans as Moors.

To clarify, Pinn argues, “religious consciousness is tied to historical processes and thus to a wrestling with the past and present in the construction of a future hoped to be different in tone and texture.” Experience is the substance that provides African American religious traditions their purpose and each religious tradition has its own unique reason and purpose for being. The purpose for the Moors is to define themselves as a free people, with a greater sense of self.

According to Pinn, the responses to terror for African American religion developed into an institutional reality and a struggle for liberation that was expressed in three ways: “socioeconomic and political terms; aesthetic and ritual dimensions of religion as liberation in spiritual terms; religious thought as liberation in theological terms.” This dissertation will explore how the Moors have expressed freedom through the development of the MSTA and how they have responded to terror socioeconomically, aesthetically and theologically. As it will be shown, the Moors have developed their own worldview that allows them to navigate the horrific modality of African American life.

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74 Ibid., 157.
75 Ibid., 172.
76 Ibid., 82.
Synopsis

This investigation into the Moorish Science Temple of America is focused on the development of religious thought. The fundamental thesis of this dissertation is that Noble Drew Ali developed the MSTA to address the absurd modality of African life in America. He accomplished this by using a synthesis of philosophical traditions to provide African Americans with a sense of culture. This synthesis forms the foundation upon which African American Islam was built. The African American Islamic tradition has taken on its own life, evolving into a movement that has greatly impacted African American religious thought of the 20th century.77

Simply put, the focus of this dissertation is to decode the history, holy text and philosophy of the MSTA in order to gain a more in depth view of the movement to explain, who, what, where and why they (MSTA) are. There is a need for this research, as the MSTA is a vastly understudied religious movement. Scholars have repeatedly glossed over the contributions of the MSTA as well as the complexities of Noble Drew Ali’s vision for African Americans in the United States. However, the organization is repeatedly discussed or mentioned in the continuum of the history of African American Islam, but rarely given its own space. The aim of this dissertation is to fill the proverbial holes in the current academic research on the Moorish Science Temple of America and African American Islam. This will be done through an in depth discussion of Moorish symbols and symbolic language, beginning with the term moor.

77 Ibid., 82-83. For Pinn, “religious traditions are not static but are ever evolving in light of changing temporal conditions as well as the push for transformation of improvement generated by their own internal creativity and ingenuity.”
Chapter 1

Islamic Africans: A Contextual Discussion

Until the Lion has her own storyteller, the hunter will always have the best part of the story.\(^78\)

The crux of the above *Ewe* proverb is the subjective nature of history as told by humans who have their own views, perspectives and experiences that get woven into the tapestry of the historical record. History itself is merely a human element of civilization that is highly dependent on who is giving and receiving the information.\(^79\) This is the very reason for Paul Ricoeur's development of the hermeneutics of suspicion. He argued history is a symbol presented by a given civilization that could be a lie or at least a subjective truth.\(^80\) This chapter will struggle with this problem in the context of Moorish history as told from diverging perspectives of those inside and outside the organization.

This chapter will address the differing perspectives on the meaning of the Moorish name. Addressing the meaning of *moor*, will involve an investigation of how the Moors have been signified by those outside their ethnic group as well as how they have signified themselves. For the Moors, their name speaks to their origins as an ancient ethnic group, their affiliation as a sovereign nation, and their religious posture in the world. The story of Moorish origins will deal with their theorized beginnings, migration patterns and interaction with other nations and groups of people. Also, this discussion will focus on the way Moorish culture or 'Moorish Science' has been

\(^{78}\) This is an Ewe proverb. The Ewe are a West African peoples from what is known as the Volta Region in present day Ghana.


signified. This conversation centers on the Moors of the Mediterranean world in the seventh century of the Common Era because the Moors of the MSTA trace their ancestry through Morocco.

Moorish history will be approached in two ways. First, the history of the Moors of northwest Africa as told by historians of African and Iberian antiquity. Next, I will focus on the history that is told by Moorish Americans in an effort to find a measure of congruence.\textsuperscript{81} Simply put, this chapter is about comparing histories; the history told of the Moors and the history that the MSTA tells the world about itself. Jose Pimienta-Bey provides such a history in his text \textit{Othello’s Children in the New World: Moorish History and Identity in the African American Experience}.\textsuperscript{82} Moorish biographer Elihu Pleasant-Bey also provides key insight into the history of the Moors and what it means to be Moorish. These texts will serve as an insider’s understanding of the MSTA because the authors are members of the organization and use the Moorish perspective as an ideological foundation for their research.

\textsuperscript{81} Maulana Karenga, \textit{Introduction to Black Studies} (Los Angeles: University of Sankore Press, 2010), 60-67. Karenga discusses the concept of the “long view” of African History in this section of Classical African Studies. The basic premise is African American history does not begin with enslavement but with African antiquity itself. Similarly, I will approach Moorish history in the same way. In that, discussion of Moorish American history will not begin in 1913, but within the time frame of the ancient Moors.

\textsuperscript{82} Jose Pimienta-Bey, \textit{Othello’s Children in the “New World”: Moorish History & Identity In The African American Experience} (Bloomington: 1st Books Library, 2002). Evidence of the author’s religious/national affiliation can be seen with the suffix of his name “Bey” which is a label given to all Moors as they are born or ‘re-born’ into the movement. In this text, the author claims that the Moorish moniker has an Afro- Asiatic origin.
Who are the Moors?

Ali rejected the names given to Africans in America: Negro, Black, Colored, Afro-Americans, etcetera, because they were not the “true” names of the people subjected to chattel slavery in America. According to Ali, during the enslavement process “is when the word Negro, black and colored was given to the Asiatics of America who were of Moorish descent.” For Ali, the Moors are an Asiatic Nation descended from the ancient peoples of the Bible, in particular Moabites. For the Moors, the Hindus, Japanese, Chinese and the indigenous North, Central and South Americans are all descended from the lineage of Hagar and can be identified in the Bible as Moabites, Canaanites, Hittites, Cushites and Hamites. According to Ali, these groups of people are considered Moslem or Moorish because of their perceived lineage or connection to the ancient peoples of Quranic and Biblical scriptures.

The “Koran Questions for Moorish Americans” specifically address the identity of the Moors as descendants of ancient Moabites. Their particular concern here is

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83 Ibid. Contrary to western teachings so-called “Blacks”, as a people, did not originate in Africa. The origin of the “Black Man” began with the system of Chattel Slavery during the settling of the Continental Colonies of the pre-United States… The word “Black” or “Swarthy” was formerly used as a descriptive/adjective to the nationality of the African Moors, e.g. Black-a-Moor or Swarthy Moors. After the European crossing of the great Atlantic, the word black became used as marks, labels and names of identification to describe the fallen and conquered state of this mighty world civilizer.


86 Ibid., 50-51.

87 Ibid., 51.

88 Ibid., 63.
naming, because the labels of "Black," "Negro," "Colored" and "Ethiopian" do not correctly describe people of African descent in America:

85. Name some of the marks that were put upon the MOORS of Northwest, by European nation in 1774? Negro, Black, Colored Ethiopian.
86. Negro a name given to a river in West Africa by MOORS, because it contains black water.
87. What is meant by the world Black? Black according to science means death.
88. What does the word colored mean? Colored means anything that has been painted, stained, varnished or dyed.
89. What does Ethiopian mean? Ethiopian means something divided.
90. Can a man be a Negro, Black, Colored or Ethiopian? No.
91. Why? Because man is made in the Image and after the likeness of God, Allah.  

In this series of questions and answers it is clear humanity (for the Moors) is critically dependent on their name, what they call themselves, and the nation to which they are connected. For the Moors, the words Negro, Black and Colored deter attention away from who the Moors are in relation to the divine. The "NBC" labels, as they are called, point everywhere but to Allah.  

Definition

Modern definition of the word moor is “a Muslim of the mixed Berber and Arab people from Northwest Africa.”  However, the designation moor is originally derived from the

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90 Ibid., 66-67.
91 Elihu Pleasant-Bey, *Exhuming a Nation: Biography of Nobel Drew Ali* (Memphis: Seven Seal Publication, 2004), 39. These suffixes are “Bey” and “El.” They will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.
Greek term mauros, which means black or dark.\textsuperscript{93} The Greek language\textsuperscript{94} shares an etymological connection with Latin\textsuperscript{95} (a language that informs many languages of the western world: English, Spanish, Portuguese, French and Italian).\textsuperscript{96} The word moor is very similar for the Greek and Latin languages, as they are mauros and mauri.\textsuperscript{97}

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\textsuperscript{94} Hans Henrich Hock and Brian D. Joseph, *Trends in Linguistics - Language History, Language Change, and Language Relationship: An Introduction of Historical and Comparative Linguistics* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, a Division of Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. KG, 2009), 53, “The Greek language, in the extreme south of the Balkan peninsula, was until recently believed to have been first recorded about 800BS. Some time prior to that date, alphabetic writing had been developed from Semitic source in Asia Minor. The introduction of the alphabet was a technological innovation which some scholars believe made it possible for the Homeric epics, the Iliad and the Odyssey, to be given a more permanent written codification even though they had been successfully handed down for centuries in and oral tradition, and the earliest manuscripts of the epics date from much later. Still, the introduction of the alphabet was a well-documented historical even, so it was generally believed that no Greek texts older than the ninth century BC would ever be found. All of this changed dramatically in 1952, when it was discovered that the non-alphabetic “Linear B” script of Bronze-Age Mycenaean times was used to write an early form of Greek, call Mycenaean Greek. This discovery pushes back our knowledge of Greek to a time between about 1400 and the twelfth century BC, a period when some of the linguistic changes that differentiate Greek from the rest of the Indo-European languages had not yet taken place.”
\textsuperscript{97} Benjamin Stevens, “Aeolism: Latin as a Dialect of Greek”, *The Classical Journal* 102 (2006/2007): 115-116. “Dionysius thus claims that Latin is a mixture of Greek, especially "Aeolic," and unnamed non-Greek speech. He goes on to hint that this linguistic mixture is the result of "frequent interminglings" between Romans and non-Roman peoples. The language, in other words, is taken to reflect cultural contact and group overlap. None of this is unique to Dionysius… The idea is striking for two reasons: first, because of how it differs from modern explanations of the similarities (and differences) between Latin and Greek; and, second and more important, for how it
respectively. The original meaning of the Greek word *maur* as black or dark skinned, places the name *Moor* in context.\(^8\) The context, in this instance, is the encounter of people of a darker hue with Europeans of the Greek language group. Meaning, *moor* is a designation given to a people by another group of people based solely on skin color.

However, Chouki El Hamel, author of the article “The Transmission of Islamic Knowledge in Moorish Society from the Rise of the Almoravids to the 19th Century,” raises an interesting point on Arabic etymology. He argues the Moors of Spain called themselves, “*al-bidan* (‘the White people’) before the colonial period.\(^9\) This is in contradiction to the terms that come from the European based languages: Greek and Latin. It may be possible those of the European based languages saw the Moors, a few hues darker than themselves, and named them appropriately. Whereas, the Moors of Iberia saw their own skin color in contrast to darker peoples of the South and named themselves appropriately. This is merely speculation, and only important to the overall

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thrust of this dissertation insofar as it highlights the very subjective nature of ethnic and racial identity.

The contradicting ethnic understandings of the Moors as noted above are not just a conflict of race but ethnicity as well. For instance, the Moors of antiquity are many times described as an amalgamation of Arabs and Berbers\textsuperscript{100} from North Africa.\textsuperscript{101} Arab is also a word of Greek origin but contains conflicting meanings. According to the text, *Classical Islam* by Gustav E. von Grunebaum, the word means ‘passerby’ or ‘nomad.’\textsuperscript{102} Other texts, such as *The Age of Faith* by William Durant, claim arab is derived from the word *arid*, which means ‘dry climate,’ a basic and adjectival description of the land of origin for Arab people.\textsuperscript{103} So, as opposed to the origin of the word *moor*, arab is culturally and environmentally centered, but still based on outside observation.

In Latin, *berber* is derived from the word *barbari*, which means barbarian or a person of foreign culture.\textsuperscript{104} It is also theorized by Paul Baepler in the article “White

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\textsuperscript{100} John G. Jackson, *Introduction to African Civilizations* (New York: Kensington Publishing Corp, 1970), 160. “After the destruction of the old city of Carthage in 146 B.C., the Romans established a group of five provinces in North Africa, which territory was called Africa Romana. The ancient Libyan inhabitants of this region, originally a branch of the western Ethiopians, became intermixed with the Phoenicians, Greek, and Roman immigrants. The modern obsessions of racial and religious prejudice were unknown in the ancient world, and the various ethnic groups intermarried freely. The Romans called the indigenous dwellers of North Africa Barbari (barbarians), from whence we get the name “Berber.” So in medieval and even modern times the North Africans have generally been known as Berbers.


Slave, African Masters”, the word has Arabic origins, from the word berbera which means to babble or to speak unintelligibly.\textsuperscript{105} There is also a Hebrew variation of the word, which means ‘people of the countryside or desert.’\textsuperscript{106} The difference with the word berber and its meaning is that it does not reflect the issue of skin color as moor does.\textsuperscript{107}

It does, however, share some relation with the meanings of the word arab, at least on a  

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because of any cultural inferiority, but merely because they had certain social customs that were different from those of the Romans. The Libyans or Berbers possessed a matriarchal type of social organization, which was common to all African societies, but which seemed quite odd and strange to the Romans of Europe.”

\textsuperscript{105} Paul Baepler, “White Slaves, African Masters.” \textit{Annals of the American academy of the Political and Social Science}, 588 (2003): 91. “Most scholars agree that Barbary originated from the Greek barbaros of the Latin barbarus to signify non-Greeks or non-Romans, and thus uncivilized population.” John Stirling, “The Races of Morocco,” \textit{Journal of the Anthropological Society of London}, Vol. 8 (1870 – 1871) (Great Britain: Royal Anthropological Institute, 1871), clxx. “The name Berber is probably derived from the Arabic word berbera, and if so, may mean a jumble of unintelligible cries – a not unnatural description for one barbarous people to give of another barbarous people’s language which they did not understand.”

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., clxxiii. “The Hebrew word bar signifies “son” and eber or ebr " region on the other side"; so that Bar-eber or Bar-eberon might signify "the people onthe other sicle”,i.e. "the people beyond the boundary, or across the stream." Again, the Hebrew bar is a field, plain, country, and the Arabic barr is also a desert: so that a compound, Berber-berr, or Bar-berim, might mean "people of the country or of the desert." Now this latter etymology (people of the desert) was supported by the fact that Barbary, before it was inhabited by the Arabs, was almost depopulated, and also because all the cases of the desert were formerly peopled by Berbers. But another etymology might still be found. Among other names for Barbary, in vulgar Arabic, were Beldd-el-MogJidrebaJi, "the country of the West"; and El-MogJireb, "the West," Berr-el-GJiarb, and El GJiarb respect\textsuperscript{ively} of the same meaning. Now, if the term El-Gharb was used to designate Barbary, might not this district also be called the Berr; and if so the inhabitants would be named Bar-Berr, "the people of the Berr."

\textsuperscript{107} Ivan Van Sertima, ed., \textit{Golden Age of the Moors} (New Jersey: Transaction Publishing, 2004), 4. Despite the meaning, Berbers were still known throughout the ancient world as dark skinned people who are closely connected to the Moors, “The original Black Berbers, who were called Moors, were the North African ancestors of the present day brown and brown-black people of the Sahara and the Sahel, mainly whose called Fulani, Tuareg, Zenagha of Southern Morocco, Kunta and Tebbu of the Sahel countries as well as other black Arabs now living in Mauretania and throughout the Sahel. They include the Trarza of Mauretania and Senegal, the Mogharba as well as dozens of other Sudanese tribes, the Chaamba of Chad and Algeria.”

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cursory level, because arab is culturally focused on nomadic living of the desert. But again, like the words moor and arab, berber is a label placed upon a group of people by foreign interests.  

Pleasant-Bey argues an Arab-centered understanding is a way of hiding the Moors behind the veil of Islam as presented by the Prophet Mohammad. He states, the "’hiding of the Moors’ came in the Arab shadow, cast behind the spread of Islam across Africa." For the Moors, the fact that the modern definition of ‘the Moors’ (as a mixed group of Arabs and Berbers) is a way of hiding the true presence of the Moors in history, which (in effect) will detract people's attention away from the true message of Allah.

Meaning

Much of the issue with how the Moors have been defined is the focus on their racial identity (skin color) rather than their ethnic identity. Susan Nance argues, “Noble Drew Ali was one of many street orators who gradually built a large following by teaching a religion that presented an interpretation of black identity African Americans found both challenging and familiar. Ali taught that American blacks could take their rightful place among American’s many ethnic groups only by defining themselves, not in terms of race

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108 Mauretania: http://www.libraryindex.com/encyclopedia/ (accessed July, 2010). “Mauretania, or Maurusia, as it was called by Greek writers, unquestionably signified the laud of the Maui, a term still retained in the modern name of Moors, and probably meaning originally nothing but ‘black men.”’ Morocco: Raphael Chijioke Njoku, Culture and Customs of Morocco (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006), 11-13. Mauritius: Sydney Selvon, Historical Dictionary of Mauritius (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1991), xi. According to the text Mauritius was name after the Dutch ruler of Nassau at the time they were occupying the island, Emperor Maurice. The name Maurice also has Greco-Roman origins and literally means dark skinned person or Moor.

109 Elihu Pleasant-Bey, Exhuming a Nation: Biography of Nobel Drew Ali (Memphis: Seven Seal Publication, 2004), 170. The author also argues that the Siddis ethnic group of India are another ethnic group that are really a Moorish group that has been hidden by from public knowledge through a distortion of history.
but ethnicity as Moorish Americans.”\textsuperscript{110} Again, this is the very problem Ali attempted to define away through his \textit{Koranic Questions}, in that the “NBC” labels were focused on the color or physical appearance of African Americans rather than their ethnic or cultural identity as Moors. Simply put, the Moors argue that this is a problem of African Americans knowing their heritage as Moabites whose ethnic identity speaks to a certain relationship with the ancient and modern nations of the world.\textsuperscript{111}

To provide insight on the Moorish perspective, according to Jose Pimenta-Bey the signifying of the African (Moorish) people by Greeks, Romans and other non-Moorish peoples is only evidence of their inability to understand (or ignorance concerning) the true ethnic identity of the Moors. According to him, the ethnic identity of the Moors is critical to the overall understanding of the MST\textsuperscript{A}\textsuperscript{112} because this identity includes the importance of race or skin color as well as cultural heritage.\textsuperscript{113} Moreover, Pimenta-Bey argues, Eurocentric scholarship on the Moors has diminished their ethnic identity so they are defined and portrayed as Arab people, not African.\textsuperscript{114} As such, the true nature of who the Moors are historically and culturally becomes lost or forgotten.\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{111} Video Recording, \textquotedblleft The Moorish.\textquotedblright
\textsuperscript{112} Jose Pimenta-Bey, \textit{Othello’s Children in the “New World”: Moorish History & Identity In The African American Experience} (Bloomington: 19 Books Library, 2002), 17.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 17.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 18-20.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 22-23. For this Moorish scholar the history of the Moors is somewhat over shadowed by the scholarly focus on Berbers, who are defined as an ethnically and racially mixed group of people from North Africa, resembling modern day Arabs. Pimenta-Bey argues that this conclusion does not hold water when examining the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Berbers and Moors.
According to Pimienta-Bey, the Moors must be examined from an African centered\textsuperscript{116} perspective in order to understand the Moors on their own cultural terms.\textsuperscript{117} Further, he understands all African people within the United States as oppressed Moors, not Negroes, Blacks or African Americans, a sentiment very consistent with the way Moors are taught in the Temple.\textsuperscript{118} Therefore, Pimienta-Bey argues his study is Moorish-centered because African people (of the new world in particular) are Moors.\textsuperscript{119} Pimienta-Bey, in essence, is arguing from a Moorish theological perspective to claim Moorish history is the history of a distinct African/Asiatic ethnic group called Moabites.

Pimienta-Bey’s perspective as a Moor provides insight into the ethnic understandings of the Moors, i.e., they see themselves as an ancient people, Asiatic in origin, but African in appearance.

Pimienta-Bey’s approach towards the ethnic identity of the Moors is telegraphed by the title of his work *Othello’s Children in the New World*. That is to say, the Shakespearean focus of Othello obviously pertains to the blackness of the Moors, because this was the point of the story: to deal with the issue of color/race/ethnicity in the medieval European world. In her article “Othello: The Moor and the Metaphor,” Phyllis Natalie Braxton states, “Shakespeare’s play itself demonstrates that Othello’s color


\textsuperscript{117} Jose Pimienta-Bey, *Othello’s Children in the “New World”: Moorish History & Identity In The African American Experience* (Bloomington: 1\textsuperscript{st} Books Library, 2002), 3-5.


\textsuperscript{119} Jose Pimienta-Bey, *Othello’s Children in the “New World”: Moorish History & Identity In The African American Experience* (Bloomington: 1\textsuperscript{st} Books Library, 2002), 1-16.
outweighs in significance the element of race. Physical appearance, of course, helps to
define race, and Othello’s black skin and thick lips identify him as a member of the
Negroid Race as distinguished from either the Caucasoid or Mongoloid races.”¹²⁰ This
also seems to be the case for Pimienta-Bey, as skin color is critical to the overall
trajectory of his research. However, skin color is not so straightforward for the Moors
because to be “Black” as a way of self-identifying is problematic, the Moors self-identify
as Moorish to be in congruence with the will of Allah. At times this approach seems very
contradictory, in that the ethnic identity of the Moors is critical to their self-identity and
[color] very much matters. It would seem if one’s ethnic identity is established they
would not need to place much emphasis on color, but this is not the case for the Moors as
ethnic identity and skin color are intrinsically connected.

The image of the Moor(s) was a constantly fluctuating phenomenon in European
literature. Either the Moors were heroes or villains, noble or savage, black and beautiful
or black and ugly. Regardless of the image, one thing was certain: the Moor stood out in
European society. One can only conclude, color and culture had much to do with the way
they were signified in the European world because according to the literature that is what
stood out the most. In the article, “Making more of the Moor: Aaron, Othello, and
Renaissance Refashioning of Race” Emily Bartels states,

One such Other was the Moors, a figure who was becoming increasingly
visible within English society in person and in print, particularly in the
description of African, in travel narratives and on the stage. While
blackness and Mohammedians were stereotyped as evil, Renaissance
representations of the Moor were vague, varied, inconsistent and
contradictory. As critics have established, the term “Moor” was used
interchangeably with such similarly ambiguous terms as “African,”

¹²⁰ Phyllis Natalie Braxton, “Othello: The Moor and the Metaphor.” *South
“Ethiopian,” “Negro,” and even “Indian” to designate a figure from different parts or the whole of Africa (or beyond) who was either black or Moslem, neither, or both. To complicate the vision further, the Moor was characterized alternately and sometimes simultaneously in contradictory extremes, as noble or monstrous, civil or savage.\footnote{121}

This highly varied and contradictory signifying of the Moors of antiquity may be why the MST\footnote{122}A is so adamant about their name and status here in the United States. Perhaps this is the problem Pimienta-Bey is attempting to address in his research. In that, the image of the Moor(s) is controlled by forces outside of Moorish society, and this is a problem the MST\footnote{123}A is attempting to rectify. Therefore, it is important for Pimienta-Bey, as a Moorish American, to provide clarity to both the image and culture of the Moors.

Pimienta-Bey argues the word moor is actually derived from the word moab,\footnote{124} which is the name of an ancient ethnic group from North Africa. To this point, according to Pleasant-Bey, the ancient Moabites were from Asia and were “given permission from the Pharaohs of Egypt to settle and inhabit Northwest Africa.” Use of the term moab may be a way for the Moors of the MST\footnote{125}A to connect themselves to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[122] J. A. Rogers, \textit{Nature Knows No Color Line: Research Into Negro Ancestry of the White Race}. (St. Petersburg: Helga M. Rogers, 1952), 53. According to J. A. Rogers moor was a word imported into the Greek lexicon from an African language (the specific language is not clear). Herein lies the problem that is presented by the Moors, in that it is important that their African ancestry is known and recognized. It seems odd that the word moor would an African word and still carry the meaning of dark or brown skinned as it would make sense that phenotypic descriptions would come from outside of the ethnic group rather than inside. For example, would it make sense if group of tall people refer to themselves as tall to themselves. It would make sense that that would be a label given by outside who was vertically challenged.
\end{footnotes}
something already existing in the Judeo-Christian religious lexicon that was most popular among African Americans at the time. Linkages between the word *moor* and *moab* are quite loose as are the linkages between the Moorish people and the Moabites. It seems to be based solely on biblical interpretation and on a particular read of history. More accurately, the term *moor* seems to be a borrowed word that points to ancient origins but in reality has a very tenuous connection to the involuntary migrants of North America, known commonly as African Americans.

According to Nance, the term *moabite* was chosen for a reason. She argues, “Moabite ancestry would have afforded African Americans with an inspiring past.” This seems to be the case, as the history told by the Moors is an inspiring one of ancient wisdom (presence in Kemet) and medieval glory (conquering of Spain). But again, these connections are tenuous at best as (1) there is no direct link between the words *moor* and *moab*, (2) there is no clear link between the peoples of ancient Egypt, the people who conquered the Iberian peninsula and African Americans in the United States, and (3) even if the first two had some semblance of truth, the ethnic make up of African Americans is

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125 Ibid., 17-28. This is a conflict that Pimienta-Bey addresses directly as his primary concern in the ethnicity of the Moors. Particularly for him the term *arab* refers to a lighter skinned ethnic group who are originally from the Arabian peninsula and should not be confused with dark skinned North African Moors. More precisely, the focus is on the skin color of the Moors as most definitions of the word *moor* point to the dark skin of the people. Skin color seems to be an important dividing line that existed in the ancient world and still has meaning in the modern world. Pimienta-Bey also argues that *moabite* or *moabita* is a synonym for the word *almoravid* which is the name of a Berber dynasty of the Moors. He also connects the etymology and history of the Moors to the Chaldeans as well. This connection like the Moabite connection is based Moorish understanding of ‘asiatics’ who are Black people from Asia, particularly Asia Minor, the region stretching from Arabia to the borders of modern day Pakistan.

so diverse that it is hard to accept the idea that Moorish ethnicity would be the most prominent. It is more likely Noble Drew Ali constructed this history and ethnic identity from the information he had available to him at the time.

But again the question still looms, why the Moabites, particularly when Africans in America have a pattern of comparing their experience to that of the Israelites? Israel represents a nation that was oppressed and enslaved by other more powerful nations, particularly Egypt. Peter Wilson in the text *Sacred Drift: Essays on the Margins of Islam* argues the Moorish focus on the nations of Moab and Canaan was a bold statement, which spoke against the assumed benevolence of Israel. Further, if Ali were to put ancient Egypt in a place of high esteem, it rightly would not make sense for Moors to be an Israelite nation as Egypt enslaved Israel. Nance remarks, “for Ali the metaphor of black slavery in Egypt made no sense. Why would Egyptians enslave fellow Asiatics?” Ali’s focus was to unite the non-white nations of the world. Therefore, he challenged the popular Biblical assumptions, which forced African Americans to challenge their beliefs. This may also be the reason why the original name of the Moorish Science Temple of America was the Holy Canaanite Temple. The nation of Canaan, like Moab, being a group of Asiatics who were oppressed by the Israeli nation, was an ancient ethnic group who Africans in American could identify with.

The purpose of sifting through this etymology is to demonstrate the historical relevance of the term *moor* both to the Moors of the MSTA and those outside of their

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129 Ibid., 107.
culture. Regardless of the true origin of the word *moor*, or who is responsible for naming whom in the ancient world, it is clear the term *moor* is loaded with meaning. For Pimienta-Bey and Pleasant-Bey, the Moors are an African-Asian ethnic group whose self-definition comes from within.\(^{130}\) However, the definition seems to be more Biblically centered rather than solely African centered.

**Moors: Ancient to Modern**

This section will focus on the bridge that connects the ancient Moors (Moabites) to the Moors who colonized the Iberian Peninsula. The reason for this focus is because this is the point in history the MSTAs claims their “science” or culture became demonized by Western culture through the Spanish Inquisition. This history is claimed by the MSTAs as their own, a fact which indicates that this is a method or a way for them to read themselves into history. This is similar to how the term *moabite* was incorporated by the Moors of the MSTAs to read themselves into Biblical scripture. In both cases the Moors have no concrete connection to the phenomena, but it serves them as a way to provide context to their claimed origins and history.

*Iberian Colonization*

During the dark\(^{131}\) and early middle ages of Europe\(^{132}\) invaders from North and West Africa (present day Morocco and Mauritania) conquered and colonized the Iberian


\(^{131}\) John Dwyer, *Church History: Twenty Centuries of Catholic Christianity* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1998), 155. It is interesting to know the uses of the word dark the in the ancient and modern worlds. As it is common to refer to the period of European history after the fall of the Roman empire as the “dark” ages because the light of civilization did not shine brightly on this region.
Peninsula (present day Spain and Portugal) as part of the expanding Muslim empire.\textsuperscript{133} However, this was not the first time that Africans traversed in, through and settled Iberia. There was and always has been frequent cultural and resource exchange in the Mediterranean world which predates the presence of the Moors.

For example, banished rebel leader Batrikus of North Africa and his army (circa 1000 B.C.E.) settled in Spain for over one hundred and fifty years, until expelled by the Romans.\textsuperscript{134} Several centuries later, parts of Spain were resettled by General Taharka of Ethiopia during the sixth century B.C.E.\textsuperscript{135} Then, at the climax of the Punic Wars in the second century B.C.E., Hannibal of Carthage led his army over the Straits of Gibraltar to conquer the Roman capital of Roma.\textsuperscript{136} Failing in this endeavor, the Carthaginians were forced back to the southern Mediterranean shores of Iberia from which they came.\textsuperscript{137} After Hannibal’s defeat, Iberia remained under the control of the Roman Empire until it fell in the fourth century of the Common Era. These African military encounters with Iberia were relatively brief compared to the seven hundred year colonization by the Moors.\textsuperscript{138}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[134] Ibid., 1.
\item[135] Ibid., 1-2.
\item[137] Ibid., 148-149.
\item[138] It must be noted that there was very little discussion of these Africans in Pimienta-Bey’s research. If what makes a Moor a Moor is skin color then it would stand to conclude that the Moorish presence in Iberia was well before 711 of the Common Era. But there is no discussion of these people by Pimienta-Bey or any other scholar referring to these predecessors as Moors.
\end{footnotes}
After the fall of the Roman Empire, the Iberian territory came under the rule of the Vandals. The Vandals not only took control of Iberia but much of the North African providences that were formerly occupied by Rome, such as Carthage, Mauretania and Morocco. After the brief reign of the Vandals, the Visigoths became the new colonizers of the land and kept control until the Moors took over. The Gothic Kingdom of Iberia was in constant conflict with the armies of the Byzantine Empire and the Gauls to the North. The Goths were not a large enough occupying army to stave off the outside forces who wanted the spoils of Iberia, which would eventually mean their defeat at the hands of the Moors.

According to John G. Jackson, in *Introduction to African Civilizations*, the King of the Visigoths, Roderick, found a locked palace in Mauretania, where a prophecy foretold

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141 John G. Jackson, *Introduction to African Civilizations* (New Jersey: Kensington Publishing Corp, 1970), 164-167. These areas were extensions of the Roman empire and were labeled as providences.
146 Mikaela Rogozen-Soltar. *Al-Andalus in Andalusia: Negotiating Moorish History and Regional Identity in Southern Spain*, *Anthropological Quarterly* 80 (2007): 882. “The reenacted 711 invasions of the Moors casts them as trespassing guests against “original” Visigothic Spanish hosts. But in the second reenacted battle representing the 1492 expulsion of the Moors, the 700 years of Al-Andalus position the Moors as hosts and the Catholic Kings, arriving with the reconquest armies from the North, as invading “guests,” yet also as triumphant, returning “authentic” hosts.” (What role, then, do Muslim immigrants arriving today occupy?)
of the impending invasion of the Moors.\textsuperscript{147} This prophecy frightened Roderick and his constituents but there was nothing they could do to keep any large army from encroaching on Iberian shores. Shortly after this discovery, a Muslim governor Musa-Ibn-Nusayr established the presence of Moorish culture in Iberia in 708 of the Common Era.\textsuperscript{148} The eventual conquest of the Iberian Peninsula came at the hands of General Tarik-Ibn-Zayid from Mauretania three years later.\textsuperscript{149}

\textit{Moorish Science}

The fall of the Roman Empire brought the dawn of the dark ages for most of Europe. Spain itself was a collection of tribes and scattered Christian and Jewish settlements that were conquered and re-conquered by outside forces. As Islam began to flourish in the seventh century it spread throughout southern Arabia and North Africa. The colonization of Iberia by the Moors began in 711 C.E., and with it came African and Muslim culture.\textsuperscript{150} Further, the Moorish presence in Iberia caused conflict between the Christians remaining from the Roman Empire and the colonial Muslims who quickly spread to all parts of the peninsula.

Despite the constant tensions between Catholics and Muslims in Spain,\textsuperscript{151} scholarship on this subject has argued Spain benefited greatly in terms of civilization and

\textsuperscript{147} John G. Jackson, \textit{Introduction to African Civilizations} (Née York: Kensington Publishing Corp, 1970), 172-175.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 170.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., 171-172.
technology during the occupation of the Moors.\textsuperscript{152} For example, Joseph McCabe in \textit{The Golden Ages of History} states, “In Cordova... they would find a city of 2,500,000 houses and 1,000,000 people when no city in Europe outside Moorish Spain had a population of 30,000. Its massive walls had a circuit of fourteen miles and had seven large iron gates faced with brass.”\textsuperscript{153} Cordova was not unique as there were many other cities that benefited from the presences of the Moors, such as Barcelona, Pamplona and as far north as Marseilles and Paris.\textsuperscript{154}

Likewise, according to Pimienta-Bey, the technology and knowledge the Moors brought to Iberia came from Kemet or ancient Egypt,\textsuperscript{155} as the Moors are the descendants of the pyramid builders of Northeast Africa.\textsuperscript{156} This is consistent with the theology of the MSTEA but incongruent with some of the theorized migration patterns they lay claim to.\textsuperscript{157}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[156] George G.M. James, \textit{Stolen Legacy: Greek Philosophy is Stolen Egyptian Philosophy}. (London: African Publishing Society, 1972), 39. “The people of North Africa... became custodians of Egyptian culture, which they spread through considerable portions of Africa, Asia Minor and Europe. During their occupations of Spain, the Moor (Mauretanians) displayed with considerable credit, the grandeur of African culture and civilization.”
\item[157] Jose Pimienta-Bey, \textit{Othello’s Children in the “New World”: Moorish History & Identity In The African American Experience} (Bloomington: 1st Books Library, 2002), 53. “We already know from our review of Moorish origins (ethnicity) in Chapter II that any evidence of an African presence in the Americas essentially indicates a Moorish presence. This is the postulate of any Moorish Scientist. Since the beginning of the Moorish Science movement, the official literature has supported the view that Moors (Africans) were settled and trading within the Americas long before the voyage of Christopher Columbus.”
\end{footnotes}
Nevertheless, in the Moorish view, the colonization of Spain is an example of the strength and beauty of Moorish culture.\textsuperscript{158} Contributions to Iberian culture were not only significant in architecture and infrastructure but also in agriculture, civic development and education. Rudolf Rocker in the text \textit{Nationalism and Culture} argues:

\begin{quote}
While in the tenth and eleventh centuries all Europe could show scarcely a single public library and could boast of only two universities that were worthy of the name, there were in Spain at that same time more than seventy public libraries of which the one in Cordova alone contained six hundred thousands manuscripts. In addition, the country possessed seventeen famous universities among which those at Cordova, Seville, Granada, Malaga, Jaen, Valencia, Almeria and Toledo were especially outstanding.\textsuperscript{159}
\end{quote}

This brief narrative demonstrates the impact and influence of Moorish culture that benefited the Iberian society, particularly, the intellectual culture of the Moors, which was demonized by the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{160} For the Catholics of Iberia, what the Moors taught was called Moorish Science and was labeled black magic, alchemy, witchcraft and a host of other derogatory labels.\textsuperscript{161} This was a form of signification meant to produce a

\textsuperscript{158} \textit{Moorish-American Voice} 2 Dec. 1992 / Jan. 1993, 2. Ibid., 4 October and November 1994, 2. There is an article discussing similar issues entitled "True Moors are Builders and Doers."

\textsuperscript{159} Rudolph Rocker, \textit{Nationalism and Culture} (Los Angeles: Rocker Publication Committee, 1947), 412.

\textsuperscript{160} Mikaela Rogozen-Soltar. \textit{Al-Andalus in Andalusia: Negotiating Moorish History and Regional Identity in Southern Spain, Anthropological Quarterly} 80 (2007): 883. "To further complicate the geographic imagery of such festivals in some coastal towns, the "expelled Moors" are pushed into the Mediterranean sea (literally, part of the costumed battle takes place in the shallow water) on the same coast where the nightly news portrays the arrival of undocumented immigrants in pateras, flimsy, home-made boats unequivocally associated with desperate, "illegal" immigrants. The palimpsestic topography of the desembarco (arrival of the Moors in 711) occurring at the same site as the arrival of illegal immigrants today can serve to symbolically identify the two arrivals as equivalent, fueling anti-immigrant sentiment, especially since the reenacted expulsion plays out on the same beaches."

negative image of Moorish culture. This may also be the original idea behind the naming of the Moorish ‘Science’ Temple of America because it was Moorish ‘science’ that made a lasting mark on Spain and Europe during the Moorish occupation of Iberia. The ‘science’ is part of the reason for the violence of the Inquisition, but for the Moors the ‘science’ represents culture or sacred knowledge.

Essentially, the conflict between the Moors and Catholics was due to a crisis of religion. Moorish influence on the Iberian Peninsula was widespread. This only fueled the fire of Catholic backlash that would inevitably take place. Pauline Croft, author of the article, “Englishmen and the Spanish Inquisition 1558-1625,” states, in Spain, “between 1556 and 1563 a series of events isolated the country from the rest of Europe and managed to intensify its already fervent Catholicism.” To be non-Catholic meant one’s life was in constant danger during the Inquisition as Catholics had no interest in sharing physical or spiritual space with non-believers. An unidentified Moorish American lecturer, who created a video discussion entitled “The Moorish,” argues the Spanish Inquisition was particularly devastating because it brought an abundance of

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162 Mikaela Rogozen-Soltar. *Al-Andalus in Andalusia: Negotiating Moorish History and Regional Identity in Southern Spain*, *Anthropological Quarterly* 80 (2007): 863. “Until 2006, the culminating moment of the annual “Festival of Moors and Christians” in parts of Valencia, Spain was the sight of Muslim and Jewish figures burning in effigy. In recent history, a giant, turban-clad puppet known as Mahoma (Mohammed) was exploded each year at the festival, his gunpowder-filled head set ablaze with a cigar.”


164 Likewise, Moorish ‘science’ for the MSTA represents a similar issue in that their knowledge or ‘science’ caused them to be demonized in twentieth century America by local police as well as the federal government in the form of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

ignorance and confusion into the world through the demonizing and destruction of Moorish Science.\textsuperscript{166}

Moreover, there is an issue that presents itself when discussing the benefits of the presence of the Moors in Iberia.\textsuperscript{167} That is, patterns of history reflect the fact that most occupying forces, while bringing a measure of civility, growth and technology, are oppressive to the indigenous population of the land they are occupying. However, there is no evidence of any form of mass oppression, holocaust or genocide concerning culture or religion in Spain save for the Spanish Inquisition organized and executed by Catholics in an effort to eradicate the heresy of Islam from the Spanish population.

In spite of their contributions to Spanish & Portuguese cultural development, the Moors were removed from their land stripped of their property, and often physically brutalized in the process. In 1480, the Inquisition was established to ‘oversee conversos’ and ‘eradicate heresies.’ This Gestapo-like organization held vague and unrestricted powers. Accused persons were actually considered guilty until proven innocent,

\textsuperscript{166} Video Lecture: "The Moorish" part 3, .45-1 min.
\textsuperscript{167} Michael Gomez. Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), maps out the chronological development and movement of African Islam from the “old world” (West African and Spain) to the “new world” (Caribbean, South American, the Southern United States and then to the Northeast and Midwest) is the primary focus which demonstrates the continuity of Islam amongst Africans of the western hemisphere. Gomez’s analysis of African Islam is broken down into two historical periods: the first discusses the presence of African Muslims in the Americas through periods of enslavement which provides the context for the second part which examines Islam’s development in the United States. As discussed earlier, Moorish Science brought advancements to the Iberian peninsula, one of the most important was maritime navigation, particularly nocturnal navigation. Were it not for this skill, explorers from Iberia would have remained confined to the Mediterranean, they would not have survived a transatlantic voyage, let alone the expeditions to the west African coast. It can therefore be argued that the Moors as a culture have more responsibility in the development of the ‘new world’ than previously understood.
and the accused person’s property was permanently confiscated ‘to defray court costs.’

Again, while the record of violence against their Moorish occupiers is an infamous event in Spanish history, there are no similar narratives, records or stories of Moors treating the natives of Iberia or Catholics in such a manner.

On this point, scholars argue the image of the Moors in Spain may have been a driving force for their expulsion. On one hand, because of the technology they brought to Spain, “Moorish Science,” Moors were heralded as nobles. However, as the Spanish came to be more and more indignant towards the Moorish occupation they were painted in a different light. Israel Burshatin in the article “The Moor in the Text: Metaphor, Emblem, and Silence” explains, images of the Moors in Spain fell “between two extremes. On the ‘vilifying’ side, Moors are hateful dogs miserly, treacherous, lazy and overreaching. On the ‘idealizing’ side, the men are noble, loyal, heroic courtly – they

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169 Barbara Fuchs. *Spanish Lessons: Spenser and the Irish Moriscos. SEL Studies in English Literature* 42 (2002): 47. “The legislations targeting the Moriscos on the one hand and the Irish on the other—both ostracized cultures that threaten culturally to absorb the colonizers—follow a similar progression. Initially, the laws focus on keeping native and conqueror apart. Where England passes the Kilkenny Statutes to prevent the Old English from adopting Irish customs, the Spanish pass laws in 1513 (more than twenty years, that is, after the fall of the city to the Catholic kings) forbidding the adoption of veils and almalafas (mantles) by Old Christian women living in Granada.”

170 Annette Ivory, “Juan Latino: The Struggle of Blacks, Jews, and Moors in Golden Age Spain.” *Hispania* 62 (1979): 613. Interesting note: “The principle objects of ridicule in the theater of the 16th century are the speech, skin color and dress of the Blacks, who serve as comic relief in serious theatrical productions or are featured members of short farsical works.”
even mirror the virtues that Christian knights aspire to..."\textsuperscript{171} For the MSTA, it was this vilification that led to their expulsion from Spain.

Moreover, from the Moorish American perspective, the onset of the Spanish Inquisition was due to the sins to which the Moors fell prey. According to Pleasant-Bey, the Moors were becoming “very complaisant while in Spain” and were allowing themselves to be taken away (spiritually speaking) from the true tenets of Islamism. He states, “Moors knew nothing about these gods with such powers of allurements but have cores of lewdness, murder, theft and harmfulness. Many Moors had become Christians, Spaniards, Romans, French, British, Irish, etc., and had misplaced their ‘Keys to Civilization’ and had become disrespectful to Islamism.”\textsuperscript{172} It seems for Pleasant-Bey, the Spanish Inquisition represents a punishment by Allah because the Moors forgot who [they] were. This pattern of divine punishment will present itself again with regards to the middle passage, as a way to explain the failures or moments of weakness by the Moors.

Furthermore, the Spanish Inquisition is one example of the efforts taken by Christians to rid themselves of the Moors.\textsuperscript{173} The Christians endeavored to re-conquer their land in the name of their deity. In the process of this re-conquest, many Moors were tortured, many were expelled, but many were also enslaved. A. J. R. Russell-Wood in the article “Iberian Expansion and the Issue of Black Slavery: Changing Portuguese

\textsuperscript{172} Elihu Pleasant-Bey, \textit{Exhuming a Nation: Biography of Nobel Drew Ali} (Memphis: Seven Seal Publication, 2004), 172.
\textsuperscript{173} Jose Pimienta-Bey, \textit{Othello’s Children in the “New World”: Moorish History & Identity In The African American Experience} (Bloomington: 1\textsuperscript{st} Books Library, 2002), 49-52.
Attitudes, 1440-1770” states, “Enslavement of Muslims captured in battle was but one of the social repercussions of the lengthy Christian re-conquest of those parts of the peninsula which had fallen under Moorish domination. The number of captives taken depended on the intensity of success of the Christian campaigns.” The brutality of the Spanish Inquisition allows MST to situate itself historically in order to validate Moorish identity.

As it was shown, cultural signification played an important role into how Moorish culture was perceived by the Catholics of Iberia. The culture was foreign and came from an occupying force. Therefore, it was labeled negatively and eventually driven from the region. Adversely, for the Moors, their culture or ‘science’ brought civility to a savage and unorganized land. Perhaps in attempting to connect themselves to the Moors of Iberia, members of the MST (knowing the history of the Moors in Iberia) felt the image and identity of the Moors needed to be a primary concern. However, this is speculation, because there is no way to know whether Ali was aware of the events of the Spanish Inquisition to use them within his philosophy. More than that, there is no mention of the Moorish occupation of Spain by Ali anywhere in his writings. This is an issue that is recent and can be credited to Moorish American scholars of the last half-century. The

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175 Ivan Van Sertima, ed. Golden Age of the Moors (New Jersey: Transaction Publishing, 2004), 10. The Moors brought knowledge and information to the region that had been non existent up to that point and opened schools to educate the people of Iberia on the sciences of their culture, “Judwal, a Moorish work in astronomy, became a standard text at Oxford. Frederick II founded a university at Naples in 1224 and there he established a curriculum, which emphasized Moorish scholarship. Under him all theological studies ceased at Italian Universities and Moorish medicine and law became the major disciplines.”
Moors [themselves] would no doubt argue this is an issue of correctly interpreting Ali’s words but again all of these connections are tenuous.

**Synopsis**

This is the problem of Moorish history as told by the MSTA. It is highly subjective (as many histories are), and may qualify as more of a myth than history in the academic realm. This is not to attack the validity of their claims but just to put them and other similar histories in context. The context being: history is a human endeavor and therefore subject to the flaws of the human ego. However, therein lies the value of history as told by multiple subjects, the differences and contradictions highlight the dynamics of how and why a story is told. Ali told the story of the Moors being of very ancient origin because he wanted to change the image of how African Americans viewed themselves.

The history the Moors of the MSTA claim as their own, begins with the Moabites. Then, migration patterns take them through Egypt (Kemet), Spain and then to the new world as chattel. The Moors were enslaved, according to their belief system, because they were to be “punished for having violated ALLAH’s Laws. Enslavement was the primary penalty for Moorish (African) peoples having failed to practice the five basic principles (Love, Truth, Peace, Freedom and Justice) within their own societies.”

Through this statement it is clear the Moors do not believe there is a marked difference between what is African and what is Moorish. The very subjective nature of history as it is presented by Moorish Americans is not a lie (necessarily) or an untruth, it is a particular read of history for a people who were written out of history.

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I argue the creation of their narrative origin and migration patterns is (in essence) an attempt to create reasons for existing as Moorish American(s). That is to say, Moorish history as told by the Moors is not only meant to create self-identity but also to create reasons for carrying on the Moorish legacy. Why let such an ancient and rich culture die? Why not preserve it through the retelling of the narrative and practicing what is understood as Moorish Science: love, truth, peace, freedom and justice? For the true measure of a Moor is the preservation and continuation of culture as evidenced by the development of the Moorish Nation.
Chapter 2

Nation of Moors

This chapter will discuss the function of the Moorish Nation. It will be an investigation into the form and structure of the MST A as an organization and an ancient nation of people. Of concern will be their (1) understanding of family, (2) the by-laws of the movement as well as their method of education or their pedagogy, (3) the signs and symbols of nationalism, particularly the Moorish Flag and (4) Moorish economic development. The aim is to demonstrate the form of Moorish nationalistic structure, which will provide an in depth perspective on how nationalism works for the Moors.

The Moorish Nation

The MST A will display their own unique manifestation of nationalism, which is part of an ongoing tradition for Africans in the United States. It is difficult to argue the MST A displays characteristics of Black Nationalism, when they have a large problem with the label “Black.” Also, the label “African” does not fully get at their understanding of being Moorish, which is central to their identity. Therefore, I will argue Moorish Nationalism has its own unique structure to provide sovereignty and solidarity. 177 According to the previous chapter, to be Moorish American 178 implies you are a Moorish National, a member of the Moorish Science Temple of America, descended from the ancient Moabites of the Bible, whom practice the tenets of Islamism (love, truth, peace, freedom

177 Elihu Pleasant-Bey, The Biography of Noble Drew Ali: The Exhuming of a Nation (Memphis: Seven Seals Publications, 2004), 22. Come all ye Asiatics of America and hear the truth about your nationality and birthrights, because you are not Negroes. Man is made in the image and after the likeness of The Great God. The word black according to science means death.

178 Ibid., 195.
and justice).¹⁷⁹ This idea of nationalism is not centered on an understanding of Blackness, because to be Black for the Moors is to be dead.¹⁸⁰ Questions eighty-seven through ninety-one of Ali’s catechism state: “Black, according to science means death.”¹⁸¹

According to Pleasant-Bey “it is a legal impossibility for the so-called ‘Negroes, Blacks and Colored People’ to free themselves without the achievement of a good education in Divine National and Civil Laws.” This basically means Moors must know their “status,” which requires an intricate understanding of the form and function of laws and treaties in the United States.¹⁸² Taj Tarik-Bey, a Moorish lecturer, argues there are levels of being-ness according to the mandates of human government: national, citizen, subject and alien.¹⁸³ These levels determine the capacity of operation for a human (or group of humans) within a given society i.e., voting, access to public services, authority, economics, job opportunities, etcetera. For Tarik-Bey, the Moors qualify as nationals, who are entitled to all the rights and privileges of any citizen and their “status” (national) means they are not subject to United States laws. African Americans who are not aware

¹⁷⁹ Video Lecture: "The Moorish" Part 3, 3:43. Speaker refers to acronym Moorish American National (M.A.N.). He further states that Moorish American and Moslem are synonymous. The term Moslem will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.
¹⁸² Video Lecture: “Queen Valahra Renita-El Harre-Bey “Blacks Law/Moorish Law dealing with the courts,” Part 1, 1:30. She states, “law can only be used by people in their sovereign capacity.”
¹⁸³ Video Lecture: Tahirah Taalib-Din Show – “Truth Be Told!”; October 22, 2009; Taj Tarik-Bey, part 2, .05-.13 sec.
of their status are "subjects" under the laws of the United States, and therefore do not enjoy the privileges of nationals.

As discussed in Chapter One of Ali’s *Biography*, the “NBC” labels have origin in the oppression suffered by people of African descent in the middle passage. Pleasant-Bey argues, “the origin of the ‘Black Man’ began with the system of Chattel Slavery during the settling of the Continental Colonies of the pre-United States. The actual timing of this genocidal event lies between Christopher Columbus’ authorized invasion of this part of Northwest and Southwest Africa in 1492 and the legalizations of the Black Code Laws of 1779.” For the Moors, the so-called “Black” person (male or female) is a European invention. To them, labeling people of African descent “Black” is a deliberate effort not just to enslave and subjugate African people but a method of spiritually killing an entire race of people in order to steal their divine birthright. Again, this is a matter of “status.” To be Negro, Black, or Colored meant that one did not know one's status as a Moorish National, also known as a Sovereign.

The “NBC” labels African Americans have accepted were a primary concern for Ali because the social identities of African Americans were a major issue in the United States. Nance states, “in his own 1920s-style of political correctness, Ali threw his own title, Moorish-American, into the contemporary, and still on-going, debate among

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184 Elihu Pleasant-Bey, *The Biography of Noble Drew Ali: The Exhuming of a Nation* (Memphis: Seven Seals Publications, 2004), 21. NBC is an acronym for Negro, Black or Colored. Which are the problematic labels that have been given to people of African descent.

185 Ibid., 28.


187 The word “Sovereign” will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

188 It can be argued that the social identity of African Americans is still a major issue.
blacks over the social and political meanings of terms such as ‘Negro,’ ‘black,’ ‘colored’ and ‘Ethiopian.’” 189 Ironically, the labels African Americans accept are still a topic of serious debate, a point that perhaps speaks to Ali’s desire to address a problem he foresaw as being a major issue in the future. That is to say, Ali wanted to solidify a place for African Americans, not only historically through the development of Moorish/Moabite history, but also socially as “Moorish-American identity was predicated on finding a place for blacks in the United States alongside all other ethnic Americans.” 190

Furthermore, as a legal matter, Moorish identity 191 is not just a spiritual issue. Referring to the Treaty of Friendship between Morocco and the early colonies of the United States, the Moors of the MSTNA see their identity and their right to nationhood as a legal matter that was put in writing centuries ago. 192 This treaty is so important to the Moors that if they are ever called into court they are taught to take copies (or knowledge) of the treaty with them to prove their status. This “proof” means they are not subject to the laws of the United States court system. 193 The Moors argue, this treaty is not fully understood or recognized by so-called Black people, which allows European Americans to continue to oppress those who have not come to the realization that they are


190 Ibid., 109.


Moorish. The, for the Moors, is a consequence of ignorance or lack of self-knowledge on the part of Black people.

*Treaty with the Moors*

In 1786 Thomas Barclay negotiated the *Moroccan-American Treaty of Friendship* with Sidi Muhammad ibn Abdallah of Morocco in an effort to recognize the national sovereignty of the United States as well as proclaim friendly relations between the two nations. It can be argued this was also done to shed light on the culture of North Africa and Islam in general, as it was seen as a place of incivility compared to the emerging western power(s). “It was this neglected Morocco that was the first Arab state, the first African state, the first Muslim state to sign a treaty with the young United States.” This was not a simple matter of the time period as North Africa in general,

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194 Video Lecture: "Moorish Science Slave Trade History in the Americas" Part 16 of 19 and 17 of 19. These recording also refer to other laws and treaties that were made between the US government and the Moorish Nation: Moorish Sundry Act of 1790 and Resolution # 75 of 1933.

195 Elihu Pleasant-Bey, *The Biography of Noble Drew Ali: The Exhuming of a Nation* (Memphis: Seven Seals Publications, 2004), 127. Through your free national name you are known and recognized by all nations of the earth that are recognized by said national government in which they live. The 14th and 15th amendments brought the north and south in unit, placing the southerners who were at that time without power, with the constitutional body of power. And at that time, 1865, the free national constitutional law that was enforced since 1774 declared all men equal and free, an if all men are declared by the free national constitution to be free and equal, since that Constitution has never been changed, there is no need for the application of the 14th and 15th Amendments for the salvation of our people and citizens.


197 Ibid., 233.
Arab and Islamic culture in particular were seen as antithetical to the efforts of European Christians of the West.198

"Internationally-minded and fascinated with maritime affairs Sidi Muhammad looked northward to the sea and to commerce with Europe, rather than southward to the caravan routes and the traditional trading markets of the Sahara."199 At this time, the United States was fighting to be recognized as a legitimate governmental entity with no treasury and very few resources. It was a nation looking for allies, while at the same time trying to heal itself from the violent separation with England (the American Revolution). Further, being that most of the profitable commerce in the world at the time was still centered in Europe, it was very necessary for the United States to have friendly relations with nations that had geographic positioning, resources and international prestige.200

The video documentary “The Moorish” claims there is a letter from George Washington to the Sultan of Morocco,201 Sidi Muhammad, December 1, 1789 providing proof of national recognition. Further, France, one of the few nations that did recognize the United States (and was a secret ally during the American Revolution), was interested in helping the colonies as long as it suited their needs.202 However, the Sultan of Morocco was concerned about having a relationship with the emerging nation in part because Morocco needed allies against the European powers they faced. Moreover,

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198 Ibid., 234.
199 Ibid., 235.
201 Ibid., Video Lecture: "The Moorish" part 4.
according to Pimienta-Bey, this treaty was made by the Sultan in part to help the United States by protecting their merchant ships after they broke from Britain and were therefore no longer under the protection of the British Navy.\footnote{Jose Pimienta-Bey, *Othello’s Children in the “New World”: Moorish History & Identity In The African American Experience* (Bloomington: 1st Books Library, 2002), 102.} 

Nevertheless, the importance of the treaty is still recognized in the present day by Moorish Americans who claim their ancestry runs through the Straits of Gibraltar. For the Moors, the treaty is a written document that validates the ideas of nationalism pronounced by Noble Drew Ali. That is to say, the treaty that was negotiated by the Sultan was done so on behalf of all Moors including Moorish Americans. This is the importance of the treaty for MSTA: it validates their idea of nationhood, and gives them the right to be both Moorish and American without contradiction.\footnote{Ibid., 102-103.} Nance argues, “Ali planned for Moorish Americans to benefit from the type of protection afforded other immigrants by their home countries’ embassies and consulates in the US. Ali’s belief that nominal citizenship in a foreign state could protect African-American Civil Rights in the United States resembled the theories of another contemporary movement, namely Zionism.”\footnote{Susan B. Nance, “Moslem’s That Old Time Religion”: Moorish Science and The Meaning of Islam in the 1920s Black Chicago. (Toronto: Simon Fraser University, 1996), 110. The author continue “Ali’s belief that Moroccan subjects could and did enjoy special rights in the United States not allowed African Americans was not far fetched. African-American popular culture contained stories of North Africans escaping racial discrimination in the United States.”}

To this point, Pleasant-Bey argues, if the original United States constitutional document was legitimate and consistent with its own language, the 14\textsuperscript{th} and 15\textsuperscript{th} amendments would not be necessary. Africans in America, however, are but 3/5\textsuperscript{th} of a
human being under United States Constitutional law. He further asserts, in the United States Constitution “the word ‘Person’ was summarized into fifths and five fifths made one complete person. This ‘Person’ as ‘endowed by the Creator’ and ‘the laws of nature’ was declared ‘the whole number’ and a ‘free Person’. This endowment, with the totality of fifths, made a complete and perfect Person and subsequently a citizen.”

Further, he breaks down each fifth of a whole person:

1. SPIRIT - the indestructible God Essence in man.
2. SOUL - Actions of the mind’s Powers (Thinking, Reasoning, Willing & Understanding).
3. BODY - Flesh, human vehicle made of the earth; (often indigenous to the land of birth).
4. NATIONALITY - the descendant birth attachment through an especial nation or tribe; Free National Name, Lineage Identity.
5. CREED - Religious path of God Consciousness established through forefathers vine and fig tree.

For Pleasant-Bey, the founding fathers of the United States did not recognize the 4th and 5th elements of a whole person with respect to African people. That is why, for the MSTA, it is important for Africans in America to recognize their Nation-ness as Moorish and their true religious creed as Moorish Islam, which for them is the only way to provide Africans in America with a nationality and creed as Moorish and American.

According to Pleasant-Bey, prior to founding his organization in Newark, New Jersey, Ali reportedly contacted Woodrow Wilson to proclaim his “status” as a Moor and state that his people would be given a new identity as Moorish Americans.

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207 Ibid., 129.
The Prophet took his western birth name “Drew” before Woodrow Wilson, the Governor of New Jersey, who later became The President Of The United States. He showed how “Drew” was ‘born’ in the STATE of North Carolina, meaning under the forced application of the 14th and 15th Amendment. Proclaimed his birthright to the nationality of his forefathers, both ancient and those who worked here as slaves. By proclaiming His free National Name, ‘Moorish American’, The Prophet became the first of his People to break the judicial bonds of “N, B and C” which the USA holds the ex-slaves as hostages. Nobel Drew Ali, unlike ‘Timothy Drew’, is free! And was the first of a Clean Pure Nation of Moorish Americans, to present his own Constitution of Manumission. Neither he nor his People can be lawfully denied!!!

This chronology given by Pleasant-Bey somewhat corresponds with the founding of the MSTA, but these particular events cannot be verified by any other source outside of the rank and file of the organization.

\textsuperscript{210} Ibid., 5.
Morocco

PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP

Treaty sealed by the Emperor of Morocco June 23, 1786, and delivered in the American agent at Morocco June 29, 1786; additional article signed and sealed on behalf of Morocco July 15, 1796; ship signal agreement signed at Morocco July 5, 1786.

Entered into force July 15, 1786

Treaty and additional article ratified and proclaimed by the President of the United States July 19, 1787

Approved, replaced January 28, 1837, by treaty of September 16, 1836

3 Stat. 100; Treaty Series 34:1

TREATY

[TRANSLATION]

To all Persons to whom these Presents shall come or be made known—Whereas the United States of America in Congress assembled by their Commission bearing date the twelfth day of May One thousand seven hundred and eighty four thought proper to constitute John Adams, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson their Minister Plenipotentiary, giving to them as a Majority of them full Power to confer, treat & negotiate with the Ambassador, Minister or Commissioner of His Majesty the Emperor of Morocco concerning a Treaty of Amity and Commerce, to make & receive propositions for such Treaty and to conclude and sign the same, transmitting it to the United States in Congress assembled for their final Ratification, And by one other Commission bearing date the Eleventh day of March One thousand seven hundred and eighty five did further empower the said Ministers

* Certain agreements between the United States and France were applicable to Morocco.

* For a detailed study of these procedures and other features of the negotiation, see 2 Miler 146. The documents printed here, embodying a certified English translation of the treaty and the additional article, was signed and sealed by Ministers Plenipotentiary of the United States, Thomas Jefferson at Paris, Jan. 1, 1787, and John Adams at London Jan. 22, 1787.


211 Moorish-American Treaty of Friendship:
Furthermore, it is not just a matter of having a national name, because the Moorish understanding of nationalism is imprinted on every individual. Each person who declares their Moorish status is also endowed with a tribal name: "Bey" or "El." "Bey" denotes a Ruler with the power to govern according to Allah’s harmonies of life. 'El' characterizes a Moor who creates with infinite wisdom." Moreover, these names “are conjoined in every human as a part of his or her divine constitution.” For the Moors, this is a way of healing the African mind that has been subjugated and oppressed. More than that, the tribal name is a way of getting away from the “I” awareness that limits humans to just mind and body without spiritual awareness. The tribal name is also a symbol that each individual Moor carries as a sign of their National belonging, as they are part of something bigger than themselves.

The Moorish Nation is what makes a Moor who s/he is. Without the Nation, without the status of “Sovereign” or “Free National,” Moorish Americans do not exist. This is a critical element of their entire ideological foundation as well as their theology. Because to be a Moorish National, to have one’s proper status, also means that one is living their life by the five tenets of Islamism. The Moorish nation is strengthened by treaties signed by unrelated parties over a century prior to the founding of the MST A. This is their claim to this day, a claim that they boast proudly holding copies of the treaty


212 Video Lecture: "The Moorish" Part 1, 8:40-9:00 min.
214 Ibid., 39.
215 Ibid., 39.
216 Ibid., 39-43.
217 Ibid., 41.
218 Ibid., 41.
(Figure 1). However, legal status is only one aspect of forming (being) a nation; a nation must also be able to reproduce itself.

**Holy Family**

Part of Ali’s *Holy Koran* is a discussion that provides form to Moorish culture through its laws and customs. This section, called “Holy Instructions,” displays various elements of Moorish Nationalism, particularly their understanding of family. However, according to Nance, what Ali presents as his “Holy Instructions” comes from Sri Ramatherio’s text *Unto Thee I Grant.*\(^{220}\) Ramatherio’s work is referred to as a Rosicrucian text, although it is not clear if he was Rosicrucian. The Rosicrucians are a mystical group similar to Freemasons who claim to have come out of the European Dark Ages.\(^{221}\) The fact that the Rosicrusians are a mystical group with ties to the ancient world may be the reason for Ali’s interest in the text. However, the ultimate concern for Ali was collecting materials and information that would allow him to construct a nation. According to Nance, *Unto Thee I Grant* is one of two texts Ali supposedly plagiarized in order to complete his *Holy Koran.*\(^{222}\) However, the main concern of this section is to understand the message Ali was attempting to give the nation of Moors in the “Holy Instructions.” It is my argument that the *Instructions* are simply an outline of interpersonal and social conduct.

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\(^{220}\) Sri Ramatherio, *Unto Thee I Grant* (San Francisco: AMORC, 1995).


\(^{222}\) Susan B. Nance, “*Moslem’s That Old Time Religion*”: Moorish Science and The Meaning of Islam in the 1920s Black Chicago. (Toronto: Simon Fraser University, 1996), 127. The author states, “Ali plagiarized whole chapters of Unto Thee I Grant only making minor changes, as he had with the Aquarian Gospel. Two sections entitled ‘Husband,’ and ‘Son,’ for example, Ali reworked in the Holy Koran, as ‘Duty of a Husband and ‘The Obedience of Children towards their Father’ respectively.”
In the “Holy Instructions,” Ali first gives attention to the responsibilities of the man, then the woman, and then the children in a hierarchical fashion. Chapter Twenty of the *Holy Koran* is specifically for young men to guard against wantonness as well as the delights and desires of the flesh. In that chapter, women are depicted as sexual temptresses out for the down fall of men. To be fair, this is only one chapter. However, the others are not much better as women are always discussed in the context of men, never independently. In the next chapter of the *Holy Koran*, the instructions for marriage are directed towards women. Ali states, “Remember thou are made man’s reasonable companion, not the slave of his passion; the end of thy being is not merely to gratify his loose desire, but to assist him in the toils of life, to soothe his heart with thy tenderness and recompense his care with soft endearments.” While these instructions are meant for ‘man and wife’ they are mainly focused toward the woman and her duty in marriage to support her husband.

Chapter Twenty-two of the *Holy Koran* deals directly with the duties of a husband. However, these instructions read as a set of guidelines for choosing a female

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224 Ibid., 29-32.


227 Among the records obtained from the Schomberg Research Center was a blank marriage certificate.

228 *Moorish-American Voice*, 3 June, July and August 1993, 5. In this particular issue of the *Moorish American Voice*, this chapter of the Holy Koran makes an appearance preceded by a list of definition of particular words found in the chapter.
companion. For Ali, the happiness of the husband depends on the type of woman he chooses.

If much of her time is destroyed in dress and adornment; if she is enamored with her own beauty, and delighted with her own praise; if she laugheth, much and talketh loud; if her foot abideth not in her father’s house and her eyes with boldness rove on the faces of men; though her beauty were as the sun in the firmament of heave, turn thy face from her charms, turn thy feet from her paths, and suffer not thy soul to be ensnared by the allurements of imagination.

It seems from the excerpt that ethics regarding women’s conduct in the presence of men has not progressed much from what was actually written in the Bible or the Qur’an. That is to say, women serve a subservient role in many stories and proverbs of the Bible and Qur’an. And many times, men (or the male figure) are the epitome of the male Father God on earth and women are subordinate to them with little regard for their humanity.

229 Susan B. Nance, “Moslem’s That Old Time Religion”: Moorish Science and The Meaning of Islam in the 1920s Black Chicago. (Toronto: Simon Fraser University, 1996), 91. To this point, there is not a lot of information concerning Ali’s family. Nance briefly discusses the work of Ali’s wife Pearl. She states, “Noble Drew Ali’s teenage wife, Peal Drew Ali, already secretary treasurer of the Moorish Science Temple, also established the Young People’s Moorish League.” There is no mention of Pearl in any of Ali writings or in his Biography. Also, there is indication that he had any siblings or children of his own.

230 Elihu Pleasant-Bey, Exhuming a Nation: Biography of Nobel Drew Ali: Appendix; Noble Drew Ali, The Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple of America (Memphis: Seven Seal Publication, 2004), 30. As with many male oriented cultures throughout the world, Moorish women are expected to be seen and not heard.


233 Elihu Pleasant-Bey, The Biography of Noble Drew Ali: The Exhuming of a Nation (Memphis: Seven Seals Publications, 2004), 314. Author argues that “Human sexuality has cursed the human family with lust, greed anger, ego and a host of sins and crimes because of its selfish and unquenchable desires.”
The Moors would no doubt argue Moorish women are respected to the utmost and they are the foundation for the Moorish Nation.234 “Cherish her as a blessing sent to thee from Heaven. Let the kindness of thy behavior endear thee to her heart. She is the mistress of the house; treat her therefore with respect that thy servants may obey her.”235 For the MSTA, women are acknowledged as an important element of the family unit, but definitely share a subordinate position to the man. However, the only people who can answer questions concerning the treatment of women within the MSTA are the women themselves.

Queen R. V. Bey’s discussion of the role and place of women in the world provides some interesting insight. In a video lecture she implies women have ultimate power on the planet, they are the reason for the ebb and flow of humanity over history, because the “first school is a womb.”236 This point was not made to demonstrate the malicious nature of women but to demonstrate their power. Her entire point was that humanity will be better off when women are able to find and articulate their balance in the world.

234 Video Lecture: Sister R. V. Bey @ LIU, 40 sec. – 3:30mins. Sister R. V. Bey before she speaks an elder gentlemen provides a details security briefing in which he describes (by paces and degrees) how women and mothers in particular can get out of the building in case of fire or some other calamity. The location of fire extinguishers are pointed out and he makes a point to remind members that he was not able to confirm that the sprinkler system was fully operational as a precaution. He goes on to emphasize the important of protecting women because they are the foundation for any and all nations of the world. This further emphasizes the sacredness of women for the Moors and by extension the sacredness of the family unit.


236 Video Lecture: Sister R. V. Bey @ LIU., Part 4: 1:15. She remarks, “women are the reason for the fall of humanity.”
Furthermore, it is not unusual or taboo for women to speak in front of or teach men in the MSTA. In several cases, women are head teachers with Moorish men eagerly listening to the message. Further, women are not restricted to speaking only on family matters, or on issues that may be stereotyped as “women’s work.” Women speak on the history of the Moors, astrology and law, in addition to family planning and child rearing. It can be argued that this is a push towards intellectual equity, as the minds of women are valued just as much as the minds of men.

Ali’s instructions for his nation were relatively thorough in that he also had guidelines for parents and children as well. Consider, thou art a parent, the importance of thy trust; the being thou hast produced, it is they duty to support. Upon thee also it dependent whether the child of thy bosom be a blessing or a curse to thyself a useful or a worthless member to the community.

For Children:

The piety of a child is sweeter that the incense of Persia offering to the sun; yea, more delicious than odors wafted from a field of Arabian spices of the western gales. Be grateful to thy father, for he gave thee life and to thy mother, for she sustained thee.

The fact that the first four chapters of Ali’s “Holy Instructions” are focused on the conduct of men, women and children, it can be concluded family is a central focus of the

\[237\] Ibid. Video Lecture: Queen Valahra Renita-El Harre-Bey “Blacks Law/Moorish Law dealing with the courts.”

\[238\] However, it must also be noted, I was not able to recover any information concerning the treatment of women in the MSTA in their early history.


\[240\] Ibid., 31.

\[241\] Ibid., 32.
This focus on family can also be witnessed in the Constitutions and By-laws of the MSTA.\textsuperscript{242} Furthermore, Moorish spiritual marriage is the only appropriate way for Moors to become one with another as Sovereigns.\textsuperscript{244} Pleasant-Bey argues, the marriages of those with “NBC” status are united under European law, which makes the marriage nothing else but a prelude to divorce as they are abominations “in the sight of the Great God.”\textsuperscript{245} On the other hand, spiritual marriage, “is the ability and grace of consciousness enjoyed by a man and woman when they see ‘God’ in each other.”\textsuperscript{246} This is a harmonious union that is not based in selfishness but in faith of the one true God.

For the Moors, ‘earthly’ marriages are simply legal bonds that satisfy the needs of the government and the carnal needs of the individuals who are bound. But the spiritual marriages of the Moors are based on “divine love,” and have “no carnal desires” as they are based on the human’s higher-self. Moreover, spiritual marriages require “two to three premarital consultations… between the intended Principles and the Grand Sheik… to assure both hearts are headed inward toward perfection.”\textsuperscript{247} These marriages are also meant to keep the nation whole as Moors are to marry other Moors within the nation. This is the best way for the Moorish nation to reproduce itself, to keep it “in the family” and to teach children through the “Koran Questions for Moorish Children.”

\textsuperscript{242} Moorish-American Voice, 3 June, July and August (1993): 5-6. Chapters focused on the conduct of children and parents towards their children appear in this issue.


\textsuperscript{244} Elihu Pleasant-Bey, The Biography of Noble Drew Ali: The Exhuming of a Nation (Memphis: Seven Seals Publications, 2004), 263.

\textsuperscript{245} Ibid., 263.

\textsuperscript{246} Ibid., 263.

\textsuperscript{247} Ibid., 264.
Symbolic Nationalism

To help teach ethics, symbols and history of the Holy Koran, Ali organized a catechism that all members must memorize.\(^{248}\) There are one hundred and one questions and answers that cover Moorish history and symbolism, such as: “who Noble Drew Ali is?”; “what is the nature of Allah?”; “who Jesus is?”; “who Satan is?”; etcetera. This system of teaching is an abridged version of their entire theology organized in a simple, easily digestible form.\(^{249}\) The catechism of the MSTA provides answers to major ideas of the organization, such as their icons, philosophy and history. However, the focus, for the purposes of this chapter, will be on the Moorish Nationalism within the catechism particularly the flag and its symbolic meaning.

The first line of questions in the catechism (questions 1-11) deals with who Allah and Noble Drew Ali are to the MSTA. The next line of questions, focus on the nationality of the Moors and the nature of Moorish religion.\(^{250}\) These questions provide more clarity to the main motif of the Moorish Nation - the flag. According to the Moors, the Moorish flag is over ten thousand years old, and is symbolized by the five-pointed green star that represents the five points of the MSTA: love, truth, peace, freedom and


justice. This flag is also very important for the Moors because it is a symbol of national status.

![Moorish-American Flag](image)

Figure 2: Moorish-American Flag.

Figure 2 is an image of the Moorish Flag. The Moorish flag is remarkably similar to the Moroccan flag (Figure 3) in a number of ways, but also notably different and unique. First, the modern Moroccan flag is simply the five-pointed open green star with a red background. Second, the Moorish flag adds a circle split in to ninety-degree quadrants with a scimitar over the five-pointed open star with the word “Justice” written across the sword. Third, above the scimitar are the letters “L.T.P.F.” which are

251 Ibid., 63.  
255 Elihu Pleasant-Bey, The Biography of Noble Drew Ali: The Exhuming of a Nation (Memphis: Seven Seals Publications, 2004), 488. “The openness of the five pointed upright star represents freedom in a single expression. The interlocking of the five pointed stared represents the infinite perfection of the circle.” As opposed to the closed star (pg. 491), “represents certain jurisdiction and limited boundaries.”  
256 Ibid., 489. “The Illustrious Prophet Sharif Abdul Ali returned the Scimitar to the Moorish Tribes of the Americas. This great emblem of Justice (Justice is also the 5th of the five great Principles for the Moorish Americans) is yet another inherent saving power from the ancient fathers. The Ancient Moabites were the first to materialize the sword in harmony with universal laws.”
simply the first letters of four of the five principles of the MSTA: love, truth, peace, and freedom.

![Figure 3: Moroccan Flag](image)

The five-pointed open star is shared by both the Moorish and Moroccan nations. For the Moors, however, it represents the five tenets of the MSTA. More than that, it represents, “the North Star because it is the only light of stability in the Northern Hemisphere.” This is symbolically important for the Moors because they see themselves as the “light of humanity.”

Also, the Moorish flag features a scimitar, a curved sword that symbolizes justice, “omnipotence and the continuous, never ending presence of the Creator.”

The circle seven is also represented on the Moorish flag, with the broken circle and seven in the middle (the seven might not be immediately visible as it is represented in summation not numeration, meaning that there are seven items in the middle of the circle - the five tenets, the scimitar and the star - which represent the seven

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259 Ibid., 489. This is what the curvature of the sword represents.

260 Ibid., 480. Also known as the Moorish American National Seal.
of the Moorish Seal).\footnote{261} The Circle Seven might be one of the richest symbols, in terms of complex meaning, for the Moors.

![Figure 4: Scimitar.\footnote{262}](image)

Pleasant-Bey argues, "there are unlimited reasoning to the quadrant circles of Drew Ali. The circles are broken into quadrants around both the Circle Seven and the Scimitar and Star emblems. Being an Egyptian Adept Master, The Prophet presented the broken circle to the Moors as four gateways to perfection, to the deific life and to the oneness of God In Man."\footnote{263} These four gateways are Jesus, Mohamed, Buddha and Confucius.\footnote{264} These religious traditions are only gateways, as the true form of Islamism was only trusted to a few adepts, Ali being one of those.\footnote{265}

\footnote{261} Ibid., 480-483.  
\footnote{264} Ibid., 477.  
\footnote{265} This issue will receive more treatment in Chapter Three.
The number seven represents a number of things for the MSTA: degrees of the Ancient Egyptian Mystery System, days in a year, infinite thoughts, Chakras, sounds, colors and senses.\textsuperscript{267} It is a powerful symbol which speaks to the core of the universe and its meaning for humanity. Pleasant-Bey states,

\begin{quote}
The powers of the number seven are Eternal Creativity and Infinite Government. Contained within this number is the significance of the white light. Within the light are the rays of the seven frequencies that provide all creation of life. These lights are found in all the natural foods for the human body, which grows stationary upon the earth, e.g. fruits, vegetables and seeds, etc. The number seven is the frequency upon which this universe is created. The Seven therefore contains the vibration and power of strength, love, and the light.\textsuperscript{268}
\end{quote}

The number seven is replete throughout Moorish philosophy, and forms a foundation for their identification to the divine.\textsuperscript{269} That is to say, the number seven represents the divine in various ways. This is a major factor that is missing from the Moroccan flag in that,

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{266} The Circle Seven: www.moorishrepublic.com (accessed July, 2011).
\textsuperscript{267} Elihu Pleasant-Bey, \textit{The Biography of Noble Drew Ali: The Exhuming of a Nation} (Memphis: Seven Seals Publications, 2004), 345.
\textsuperscript{268} Ibid., 481-482.
\textsuperscript{269} G. G. E. Turner El, “Why we are in the Seven Circle.” \textit{The Moorish Guide}, 3 1935, 3. The answer to the titled question is: “Because man represents seven. The seven is a various and manifold power. For it consists of one and six, or of two and five, or of three and four.”
\end{flushright}
much of the symbolism is simply not there. And even though the Moors claim they are connected to Morocco, their philosophy and understanding of the world is quite unique.

In the catechism of the Moors, the number seven also represents the seven creative spirits called Elohim. These spirits are also known as the eyes of Allah. However, there is no indication of the purpose they serve for Allah or the Moors. Nevertheless, the Elohim are replete throughout the theology of the three major monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and al-Islam. The full scope of the meaning of “Circle Seven” is very symbolic and significant for the MSTA in that, it defines the parameters of their religious philosophy.

However, there may be some connection between the meaning of the Moroccan flag and the Moorish flag that escapes the untrained eye. For instance, the star of the Moroccan flag is known as the Seal of Solomon. This speaks to a certain level of attention to the Abrahamic tradition of the three great monotheistic religions, as Solomon is an ancestor of Abraham who appears in the holy scripture of all three religions. Further, the colors of the Moroccan flag (red and green) represent the colors of al-Islam. Pleasant-Bey discusses the Moroccan flag in context of the Moorish flag:

This flag was the Capitol flag of the Moorish Empire and represented the many kingdoms, lands, Tribes and Countries formed under the Hamitic

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271 *Bible: Genesis 1:1 & 1:26. In the Hebrew tradition Elohim is one of the names of God. In the al-Islamic tradition, Elohim and Allah are somewhat synonymous.

272 Star of David: [www.altreligion.about.com](http://www.altreligion.about.com) (accessed May, 2012). This symbol is also called the tetagrammaton.

Peoples of Northwest and Southwest Africa. This Flag predates the rise and fall of the Phoenician, Carthage, Ottoman Empires that sustained the Kemetian Mysteries used to civilize cultures across Africa in addition to the Greeks and Romans around the Northern borders of the Mediterranean Sea. However, this original ‘Old Glory’ is not the ten thousand plus-years old Flag and should not be confused with “Our Flag” spoken about by Noble Drew Ali. As explained later, every established nation has its own flag and Moorish Americans are no exception to this.\textsuperscript{274}

So the MSTA understands a connection between the flags, but they believe that theirs is much older.\textsuperscript{275}

When the Ancient Moabites originally inhabited the land called Morocco, they were guided by the brightest morning star called Venus. Venus rotates from the East to the West. Venus is the most brilliant of planets in the Solar System; because it is closer to the Sun yet, nearly the same size as Earth. Venus is seen in the Eastern skies immediately, before and sometimes during sunrise. In is not a “Fixed” star due to its orbital rotation around the Sun. Still, the Moors, traveling from East to West, kept this “Eastern Star at their backs until they reached the Western extremities. It was not uncommon for Moors to travel by the stars. They were the world’s first Astronomers and Navigators, (Moor means “Navigator”). Nevertheless, this is how the symbol of the Pentagram received its beginning by the Ancient Moors. It was not just a diagram but also indeed, a national tool of science for the “Torchbearers of Civilization.”\textsuperscript{276}

The Moors claim their flag is ancient and more relevant to humanity because it proclaims the five holy principles of Allah (the five tenets of Islamism). The Moroccan flag bears only superficial resemblance to the Moorish flag (colors and shapes without corresponding symbolic meaning). This makes it clear that the Moorish and Moroccan nations are very different entities that may have some connection, but it is still not clear what that connection is.

\textsuperscript{274} Elihu Pleasant-Bey, \textit{The Biography of Noble Drew Ali: The Exhuming of a Nation} (Memphis: Seven Seals Publications, 2004), 484.
\textsuperscript{275} Ibid., 486. About 10,000 older.
\textsuperscript{276} Ibid., 484-485.
The Moorish flag can be seen in all temples, and probably in every Moorish home. However, rather than the Moorish flag being ten thousand years old it was probably adopted by Ali sometime before his arrival in Chicago and “doctored-up” to make it unique. This, at least in the minds of the Moors, may have made their legal connection (in terms of treaties) that much more legitimate because their flag resembles the Moroccan flag.

**Moorish Law**

The “Holy Instructions” of Ali are part of the religious scripture of the MSTA that focus on the conduct of Moors in the world. What is in the scripture of the MSTA is reinforced by the Constitution and By-Laws of the organization. The Moorish Constitution has seven acts featuring the duties of the members and leadership. It outlines the divine covenant between the Moorish people and Allah. The central concern of the Constitution is the shape of family and the conduct of individuals in the Moorish family. Again, the concept of family for the Moors forms the foundation or shape and function of the entire human family. That is to say, within the By-Laws of the MSTA is the suggestion for a code of conduct for all of humanity, not just the Moors.

In the first act of the constitution and by-laws, it is made clear that the Grand Sheikh and the Chairman of the MSTA are the representations of leadership for the organization. They decide the laws and enforce them with assistance from the Prophet and the general body of the movement. Seemingly, this is a democratic approach to

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276 Ibid., iii. Act I.

279 Ibid., iii. Act 1. Referred to as the Grand Body.
leadership for the Moors or at least a democratic approach to the enforcement of the divine constitution.\textsuperscript{281} The hierarchy of leadership is as follows:

1. The Prophet,  
2. Grand Sheik,  
3. Chairman,  
4. Assistant Grand Sheik;

For the Grand Body:

1. Grand Governors and Grand Sheiks;  
2. Subordinate Temple Sheik Boards: Assistant Grand Sheiks,  
3. Chairman,  
4. Treasurer,  
5. Heads of Businesses,  
6. Outreach Agencies.\textsuperscript{282}

The point is further validated by the minutes taken at the nineteenth annual convention in 1946, wherein all officers were elected.\textsuperscript{283} The complete list of the officers for this particular convention is:

1. Convention Grand Sheik,

2. Convention Chairman, Secretary, ²⁸⁴

3. Convention Treasurer

4. Assistant Convention Chairman. ²⁸⁵

Even with this list of elected candidates there was also a list of candidates who were in good standing and fit to fill the listed positions. ²⁸⁶ The only major difference in this particular election is the addition of the word “convention,” a point that only speaks to the context of the election. ²⁸⁷

The five tenants of the Moors are replete throughout the constitution. ²⁸⁸ In the second act it states, “All meetings are to be opened and closed promptly according to the circle seven and Love, Truth, Peace Freedom and Justice.” ²⁸⁹ It can be argued, this simply means all meetings must be opened with the “Moorish American Prayer,” which states, “ALLAH the Father of the Universe, the Father of Love, Truth, Peace, Freedom and Justice. ALLAH is my Protector, my Guide and my Salvation by night by day, through His Holy Prophet, DREW ALI. (Amen).” ²⁹⁰ This point is further validated by

The collection was not extensive, but it was helpful. In total the archive contained convention minutes, and copies of the Moorish American newspaper. This information was acquired September of 2009.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 6. This particular appointment was for temporary secretary.
²⁸⁵ Ibid., 6.
²⁸⁶ Ibid., 7.
²⁸⁷ Elihu Pleasant-Bey, Exhuming a Nation: Biography of Nobel Drew Ali (Memphis: Seven Seal Publication, 2004), 453-455. The constitution of the convention is much larger than that of the organization in that it is 22 acts long.
²⁸⁹ Ibid., iii. Act. 2.
²⁹⁰ Ibid., 63.
the Moorish audio and video documentaries that show various Moors consistently opening meetings/sermons with the “Moorish American Prayer.”

In Act-Two it states that Friday is the holy day of rest for Moors because this is the day that man was made. This is referring to the creation of humanity in the first book of the Bible, Genesis, when “the first man was formed into flesh.” Moreover, Friday, for the Moors, is a holy day to prepare for the Sabbath. This is no different from the concept of the Sabbath in Judeo-Christian culture, which is usually somewhere between Friday and Sunday. Further, Friday is the day of worship for Muslims of the al-Islamic tradition and Ali acknowledges this fact in the second act.

In Act-Three of the by-laws, there is a broad yet clear charge given to the membership: “Love, Truth, Peace, Freedom and Justice must be proclaimed and practiced.

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292 Ibid., 64. This point also appears in the catechism of the Moors.


295 Jewish Shabbat is observed from Friday evening to Saturday evening. The Sabbath for many Christian movements is Sunday, however, groups such as the Seventh-Day Adventist observe Saturday as their day of rest, remembrance and reflection.

296 Tanya Gulevich, *Understanding Islam and Muslim Traditions: An Introduction to the Religious Practices, Celebrations, Festivals, Observances, Beliefs, Folklore, Customs, and Calendar System of the World’s Muslim Communities, Including and Overview of Islamic History and Geography* (Detroit: Omnigraphics, Inc., 2004), 11. Remembrance of the sixth day is acknowledgement of the sixth day of creation when Allah (or God) created Adam.

by all members of the Moorish Science Temple of America."\textsuperscript{298} As the explanation of this law continues, Ali states members should never put each other in danger or bear false witness against them.\textsuperscript{299} By the wordage of the act it can be argued this legislation is meant for interpersonal relations between members of the Nation. This point is further validated by scripture in the twenty-fifth chapter of the *Holy Koran*, which states members are to look out for the well being of each other as divine brothers and sisters of the Moorish Nation: "If thy brother is in adversity, assist him; if thy sister is in trouble, forsake her not."\textsuperscript{300} Again, this points to the ethical foundation of the MSTA, which is to always be in the spirit of love, truth, peace, freedom and justice.

The fourth act deals with conduct of members toward those who are non-members. Specifically, this act mandates that Moors be good citizens, obeying "the laws of the government, because by being a Moorish American, you are a part of the government, and must live the life accordingly."\textsuperscript{301} Ali made it clear, the Moors in America were American, not separate from any other American, evidenced by the identification card that all members are issued which states in bold letters, \textsuperscript{302} "I AM A CITIZEN OF THE U.S.A."\textsuperscript{303}

\textsuperscript{298} Ibid., iii. Act 3.  
\textsuperscript{299} Ibid., iii. Act 3.  
\textsuperscript{300} Ibid., 32.  
\textsuperscript{301} Ibid., iii. Act 4.  
\textsuperscript{302} Elihu Pleasant-Bey, *Exhuming a Nation: Biography of Nobel Drew Ali* (Memphis: Seven Seal Publication, 2004), 457. Also on this page is a copy of a membership card from a Cuban member.  
\textsuperscript{303} Schomburg Center for Cultural Research records has copies of Moorish Identification cards. On the cards it states: "In case of accidents or serious illness, notify (next of kin)." Further it states, "The bearer is a registered Moslem. Kindly retain this card and punish of said bearer is found other than righteous."
According to Nance, this card began to appear on the streets of Chicago around 1926-27 so members could be identified as free Nationals or Moorish Americans.\textsuperscript{305} For the Moors, this “card is designed to direct a Moor’s interest, from being NBC Property, to his or her proper status by identifying as a member of the MSTA Organization.”\textsuperscript{306} This is a key part of nationality for the Moors, as the moniker Moorish American first identifies the ancient national status that connects them to Allah. Further, it gives shape to their American status as those of privilege, evidenced by the treaties signed by the United States and Moroccan governments. To be Moorish American acknowledges a


\textsuperscript{306} Elihu Pleasant-Bey, Exhuming a Nation: Biography of Noble Drew Ali (Memphis: Seven Seal Publication, 2004), 458.
divine and earthly citizenry that completes the requirements for humanity.\textsuperscript{307} For Ali, Black people without a nation and thereby without a national name are not fully human, which is why Ali came to bring the message of Islamism.\textsuperscript{308}

Perhaps this is why Ali encouraged his members to obey the laws of the land, as a way of demonstrating national allegiance. Or at least as a way of maintaining the validity of the Treaty of Friendship signed in the 18th century which guarantees friendly relations between the Moorish Empire and the United States.\textsuperscript{309} In a sense, Ali seems to embrace elements of American culture, such as its attention to laws, in order to understand the system and find a way through it.\textsuperscript{310} Again, the Moors encourage all members to become very knowledgeable of United States’ law and how it affects their status as a nation of people who reside within the borders of another nation.\textsuperscript{311}

This point continues in the fifth act of the by-laws and states, “This organization of the Moorish Science Temple of America is not to cause any confusion or to overthrow the laws and constitution of the said government by to obey hereby.”\textsuperscript{312}

\textsuperscript{307} Video Lecture: "The Moorish" Part 4.
\textsuperscript{308} Elihu Pleasant-Bey, Exhuming a Nation: Biography of Nobel Drew Ali (Memphis: Seven Seal Publication, 2004), 46.
\textsuperscript{310} Video Lecture: Queen Valahra Renita-El Harre-Bey “Blacks Law/Moorish Law dealing with the courts;” Part 1: 1:30.
\textsuperscript{311} Ibid., Part 2: 0:15.
\textsuperscript{312} Elihu Pleasant-Bey, Exhuming a Nation: Biography of Nobel Drew Ali: Appendix; Noble Drew Ali, The Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple of America (Memphis: Seven Seal Publication, 2004), iii. Act 5. Noble Drew Ali, “Moorish Literature” reprinted in the Holy Koran, Circle Seven, ed. Malachi Z. York Malachizodok (Brooklyn, New York: n.p., n.d), XXXVIII. This act may have come about from the written warning Ali issued to his followers. “I hereby inform all members that they must end all radical agitating speeches while at work in their homes or on the streets. We are for peace not destructions. Stop flashing your cards at Europeans; it causes confusion.
treaties that have been negotiated between the United States and the Moorish nation, friendly relations must be maintained.\textsuperscript{313} Ali had no desire to protest or lead any movement for social justice that would put them in conflict with the American constitution. For him, social justice between the Moorish Nation and the United States was settled with the treaties that existed between them.

However, Ali’s aims were not always stringently observed by members of the organization. Particularly, by issuing identification cards, members used them as a metaphorical license to talk down to those who were not Asians. Nance states, “We can assume Ali did not intend for these cards to be shown in public or to non-Moors, except perhaps in case of emergency. However, once in the hands of newly converted Moorish-Americans these cards came to be used in public to dramatic effect. For some Moors these cards were talismans believed to protect the carrier from harm from any ill-intentioned white person.”\textsuperscript{314} This was not what Ali had in mind, as he mandated in his constitution that Moors were not to “cause confusion,” or do anything that may

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Remember your cars is for your salvation. Failure to obey these orders will be of severe consequence. We are for Love Truth Peace Freedom and Justice and when these principles are violated, justice must take its course.”

\textsuperscript{313} Elijah Muhammad, \textit{Message to the Black Man in America} (Atlanta: Messenger Elijah Muhammad Propagation Society, 1965) 220-242. This is probably the biggest dividing line between the Moorish Nation and the Nation of Islam. In that Elijah Muhammad had no interest in declaring himself an American citizen, nor did he see the NOI as anything but completely separate from the United States government. Further, the laws of the land did not supercede the laws of the NOI nor were even considered to be respectable. Just the opposite, the laws of the United States were a resulted of legislation developed my evil men who built a cursed nation. This is not to say that Muhammad advocated the downfall of America, on the contrary, America is already a cursed nation, therefore the NOI need not do anything to undermine the American way of life, only be true to Allah.

jeopardize the sovereignty of the Moorish nation. This point makes perfect sense, if one accepts the idea of a valid Moorish Nationalism verified by written documents. Consequently, this did not (and probably does not) keep Moors from flaunting their Nationhood in an effort to feed their own feelings of grandeur.\textsuperscript{315}

Nance argues, the reason the Moors were (and perhaps are) clinging to their belief in citizenry and their rights so vehemently may be because many Moors may have been former members of the UNIA. She states, “The explanation for many Moors’ interpretation of their rights as Americans and the aggressive way they used their identity cards rests also in the fact that many of Ali’s followers, as well as being Southerners, may have been former or current Garveyites.”\textsuperscript{316} That may explain why Moors initially were so aggressive, but it does not explain why current Moors would have the same posture.

Again, all of this was a legal matter for the Nation of Moors. They had no need to overthrow the government; in fact such actions may be tangential to the thrust of their philosophy concerning the legality of their “status” because if the United States government were to be overthrown their treaties would be rendered null and void. So, what good would it do for the nation of Moors to protest or rebel? For a Moor to be free [they] need only know their “status” as a Sovereign Moorish National, which is an issue of self-knowledge and identification. No need to protest against the United States for that, as it is the responsibility of the individual to know their status, not the government or any other outside entity.

\textsuperscript{315} Arna Bontemps and Jack Conroy. \textit{Anyplace but Here}. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997).

More on this point, Act-Six goes into more detail concerning the nationalism of the MSTMA. Ali argues, those who were enslaved by Europeans, so-called Negroes, Colored Folks, Black People or Ethiopians, must know their true name.\textsuperscript{317} The "NBC" labels were put on to people of African descent as a way to mark them as property. For Ali, now that enslavement was over, as of 1865, Black people in America "must proclaim their free, national name."\textsuperscript{318} This must be done in order "to be recognized by the government in which they live and the nations of the earth,"\textsuperscript{319} which is referencing the aforementioned status of being Moorish and that status being validated through the \textit{Treaty of Friendship.}\textsuperscript{320}

The seventh act of the constitution and by-laws addresses the specific duties of the members of the organization:

All members must promptly attend their meetings and become a part and partial of all uplifting acts of the Moorish Science Temple of America. Members must pay their dues and keep in line with all necessities of the Moorish Science Temple of America, then you are entitled to the name of, 'Faithful.'\textsuperscript{321}

In this section of the last act, Ali makes it clear Moors have an obligation to the organization through attendance and finances. This is no different from the Christian tithe or the Islamic almsgiving, as the finances of members are used to support the


\textsuperscript{318} Ibid., iii. Act 6.

\textsuperscript{319} Ibid., iii. Act 6.


organization. Every organization has their own method of financially sustaining themselves; the MSTA is no different in this regard.

Nationality being the crux of Ali’s ideology, the final act solidifies this point through legislative attention to family. After Ali mandates the responsibilities of members to the organization he lays out the responsibilities of members to their own families. Husbands to wives, wives to household, and children to parents, all have their roles to play as part of a Moorish family. By extension, the Moorish family has a responsibility to the Moorish Nation to uplift a fallen humanity.

Moorish Economics

In the early development of the MSTA, the movement supported itself through varicous business ventures. Business owners who were converted were counted among the resources of the Moorish Nation. Nance states, “Ali’s own businesses and any participation by Moors in the informal economy would have been part of a plan to recycle member’s incomes among Moors and within the larger black community.”

More than that, the Moors invested in manufacturing and developing various products,

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323 Ibid., iii. Act 7.
324 Ibid., iii. Act 7.
325 Ibid., iii. Act 7.
326 Susan B. Nance, “Moslem’s That Old Time Religion”: Moorish Science and The Meaning of Islam in the 1920s Black Chicago. (Toronto: Simon Fraser University, 1996), 53. This point is further validated by the independent business ads that appear in Moorish publications such as the Moorish Guide, such as G. & R Clothing Co. of Brooklyn, New York.
327 Ibid., 73.
such as herbs, oils, incense, charms, and clothing. The Moors did this via the Moorish Manufacturing Corporation, supposedly founded by Noble Drew Ali in 1927. This corporation specialized in numerous products, such as Moorish Antiseptic Bath Compound, which reportedly helped people with "dandruff, rheumatism, stiff joints, tired and sore feet." For Nance, this is one of the ways the Moors were able to amass respectability in the city of Chicago (and perhaps in other cities as well); the community recognized them as a new and strong movement. In addition, their products were advertised in the Chicago Defender, not just in the Moorish Guide. Nance argues, the "Moors had begun to establish a number of businesses as part of their program of respectable self-help." Not only did the Moors develop their own manufacturing company, they also aspired to owning and operating grocery stores and laundry mats. Despite the best efforts of the MSTA, its businesses were investigated by Chicago police under the suspicion they were fronts for illegal gambling (running numbers) and prostitution. However, there was never any direct link made between Moorish businesses and Chicago's under world.

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329 Ibid., 4.
331 Ibid., 4.
332 Ibid., 72.
333 Ibid., 72.
334 Ibid., 72-73.
The fact the Moors came under investigation or were rumored to be involved in felonious activities effected support the Moors gained through the Chicago Defender. Nance states, “the Defender discredited the Moors claiming the ‘alleged prophet’ had collected $35,000 from followers during 1928. Not only was he greedy, but he was also uneducated, they claimed." Problems with raising and sustaining money in religious organizations can be a very tricky issue because they have to be self-sustaining (for the most part) which means obtaining and appropriation of money can always be called into question. Despite this, there was no established link between Ali and any illegal activities. However, the mere accusation may have jeopardized their livelihood in the early stages of their development in Chicago.

It is not clear if the Moorish Manufacturing Corporation still exists. Although, the Moors still have their methods of obtaining financial resources. For instance, the Moorish American Voice, the current newspaper for the Moorish Nation, “costs” a dollar. Also, within this publication are clues to the current financial endeavors of the Moorish Nation. For example, a 1992 edition of the periodical mentions the existence and purpose of the agricultural auxiliary which “is to make the farm land that is owned or operated by the Moorish Science Temple of America productive, profitable and

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335 Ibid., 95.
336 All of the copies of the Moorish American Voice procured from the Schomburg Research Center in Harlem, New York have printed on the cover “donation $1.00.” The fact that it is called a “donation” is the reason why the word “costs” is in quotations above. Another interesting note: inflation has its place even among the Moors as the Moorish Guide in 1935 was only 10 cents. Susan B. Nance, “Moslem’s That Old Time Religion”: Moorish Science and The Meaning of Islam in the 1920s Black Chicago. (Simon Fraser University, 1996), 88. According to Nance, Ali “expected that every Moor buy yearly subscriptions to the Moorish Guide. Ali’s attitude was probably shared by many of his followers, aspiring temple leaders and organizers, and die-hard realist who knew that the spread of Moorish Science required money to rend and purchase temple buildings, publish religious tracts, and perform acts of charity.”
beneficial to the M. S. T. of A. "337 In addition, the entertainment auxiliary of the MSTA is meant "to function on a national level to put on entertainment and fundraisers to earn money for the Grand National Treasury, and to do other Moorish Uplifting work, also this is not to stop nor will it interfere with any local or state projects." 338 Another clue can be seen in an advertisement for the Fifth Annual Moorish Costume Ball, which asks for a donation of forty-five dollars. 339 However, there are no advertisements for Moorish products in the Moorish American Voice. So, there is no proof that this is still a way for the Moors to generate revenue. They instead seem to have explored other options or perhaps out-grown their early endeavors.

As a sovereign nation, the Moors believe in self-help and demonstrated that through their various business ventures. Ali was able to benefit from the efforts of Moorish businesses but did not reap the benefits for long because he died at a young age. Nance states, Ali "was not millionaire, but he was living well and had the money to travel to distant temples." 340 However, the point for Ali was the fact that the Moors must be self-sufficient to be counted among the civilized nations of the Earth. 341 They could not rightly demand rights, citing hundred-year-old treaties and then have their proverbial hand out for scraps from America’s table. Ali had a complete vision for the MSTA, from a developed sacred text to ancient origins; all supported by a system of Moors working

338 Ibid., 4.
341 Further evidence of finances for the organization can been seen on the minutes taken at the 19th annual convention in 1946. In this document there records of collection being taken and monies being received from members. These documents were procured from the Schomberg Research Center in Harlem, New York.
for and with each other. Regarding this point, Nance argues, “we need not necessarily judge Ali harshly for his preoccupation with money, since for him wealth was evidence of the validity of his interpretation of Islam and required for the uplifting of Moorish-Americans.” The fact the Moors became extremely popular so quickly in Chicago and throughout the Northeastern region of the United States only validates Ali’s brand of Islam. This, combined with all of the other elements of the Moorish nation described in this chapter makes a neat package of national development Ali created to address most if not all of the needs of his people. The Moorish nation was meant to have form and function as well as the ability to reproduce itself through family and sustain itself through self-help.

Moorish Nationalism

Wilson Jeremiah Moses in the text *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism*, provides a definition of Black Nationalism which states “Classical black nationalism is defined here as an ideology whose goal was the creation of an autonomous black nation-State, with definite geographical boundaries; usually in Africa.” I argue this is the same goal Ali had in mind when he created the MSTA, except his nation would be based on religious ideology not political. Further, in the *Introduction to Black Studies* text Maulana Karenga’s definition of nationalism “is social thought and practice centered in the concept and conviction that African Americans are a distinct people with a distinct personality and they have the right and responsibility to unite in order to gain the

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342 Ibid., 89.
structural capacity to define, defend and develop their interests.”344 This definition also fits the Moorish paradigm, as they have defined themselves as a distinct people with a distinct history and name. Moreover, the MSTA as an organization has created space to define, defend, and develop itself as a sovereign entity.

For Karenga, family is the foundation for the nationhood of a people; a nation that does not have strong family values or respect for the personhood of men, women and children, is bound to fall apart.345 He argues the family is the smallest example of a nation and “its strength and weakness greatly determines the capacity of Black people to achieve the social tasks they pose for themselves.”346 Family is the mechanism through which Ali has built his philosophy, as it is a critical part of their identity, pedagogy and by-laws. In each instance, Ali gave sustained attention to defining and understanding the parameters of family because, for the Moors, family is the foundation of the Moorish nation.

Further, I argue, Moorish nationalism created by Ali is in the tradition of Pan-Africanism that has existed since ancient Kemet. Kwame Nantambu in the article “Pan-Africanism Versus Pan-African Nationalism: An Afrocentric Analysis” argues, the origins of Pan-Africanism provide a long view of collective African culture when

346 Ibid., 264.
analyzed from the cultural perspective of Africa itself. He states, “the correct historical struggle by African peoples against foreign/external aggression, exploitation, occupation, domination and so forth did not begin with the European contact with or incursion into Mother Africa in the 15th century.” The MSTA is part of this history, as it is an effort to provide people of African descent with a sense of sovereignty and solidarity.

According to Nantambu, the first in a series of Pan-African Nationalist thrusts can be traced to efforts of Pharaoh Aha of ancient Kemet. Particularly, in unifying the upper and lower Nile region of the northeast African Nile valley in 3200 B.C.E. The second thrust was also witnessed in Kemet with their resistance to foreign invasion, which came to an end in the fourth century C.E. The third thrust came in the form of resistance to European enslavement and colonization from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries. This is arguably the most bloodletting of the Pan-African thrusts and it was fought not just on the African continent as the previous periods were, it was global in scope because of the nature of the opposition. Meaning, the European invaders of this period had global hegemonic aspirations and demonstrated such with their movement and transportation.

Imanuel Geiss in the article “Pan-Africanism” agrees that the foundation of Pan-Africanism did not begin in the 20th century. However, his timeline does not go back to ancient Egypt; he instead focuses on the events and phenomena surrounding the interaction of Africans and Europeans in the early American colonies. He states, “in

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348 Ibid., 568.
349 Ibid., 568-569.
350 Ibid., 569.
351 Ibid., 569.
1787, at the corners of the famous triangle of the slave-trade (later the triangle of Pan-Africanism), important developments occurred which were to become relevant for the formation of Pan-Africanism. For Geiss, the Pan-African thrust was made through the development of the abolition movement in the Americas as well as the abolition movement in Britain and certain locales in Africa, such as Sierra Leone. While both authors come to the same conclusion, that Pan-Africanism reached its pinnacle in the 20th century through the efforts of W. E. B. DuBois, Geiss’ discussion takes a shorter historical trajectory. A strategy that is less focused on the effort of African people and more centered on a multi-cultural effort.

Nantambu’s analysis is more open, in that it allows one to understand the fluidity of Pan-Africanism and how one event or phenomena feeds into the next. The last or current period, according to Nantambu, can be seen in the intellectual, geopolitical, cultural and scientific realms of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This is the era in which Ali’s movement can be situated because not only did he attempt to organize people of African descent into a cohesive nation, he also provided an intellectual and ethical foundation to shape the structure of nationhood for humanity through family.

Black Nationalism, part of the fourth thrust for Nantambu, in many ways is focused around the cultural consciousness developed by Africans in America as a function of cultural synthesis and development. Further, the development of Black

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353 Ibid., 187-188.
Nationalism deals with a crossroads of ideology. This ideology focuses on collective solidarity, meaning, Black Nationalism is focused on the multi-faceted task of nation building, or nation within a nation building. The Black Nationalist movement does not always focus on establishing a nation with physical borders. That is why it is important for organizations and movements to develop borders that are not physical walls or fences but motif, customs, and mores that clearly establish an understanding of difference.

In its earliest manifestations, political nationalism sought to separate black people from the United States; economic nationalism sought to break down racial barriers through developing economic strength in the black community; while cultural nationalism sought the same goal through the development of racial solidarity and black consciousness.\textsuperscript{356}

Black Nationalism is a combination of all of these elements: economic, political and cultural centered on one goal, sovereignty.

This is how Ali’s efforts can be situated: within the fourth thrust of Nantambu’s theory concerning the development of Pan-African Nationalism. Because what Ali gives the world is a multifaceted movement whose borders are the hearts and minds of Moors who set themselves apart as Sovereign Nationals living inside the borders of the United States. Furthermore, nationalism,\textsuperscript{357} as a critical element of the MSTA, must be

of the duality of the experience of Afro-Americans, a people who are identified by racial characteristics as different from the ‘typical’ American and denied full participation in this society for that reason, while, at the same time, they are expected to meet all the responsibilities of citizenship. “It is one of the bitter ironies of American history that the seeds of the contradiction which created black nationalism were sown in the colony of Jamestown in 1619. When settlers accepted twenty captured Africans as servants – an act which eventually led to slavery – the reality of black inequality in America was established at the same time that the rhetoric of democracy was articulated.” Vincent Harding, “The Uses of the Afro-American Past,” Negro Digest, 17 February (1968): 5.


\textsuperscript{357} Steven Hahn. A Nation under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University
considered because national identity was a major focus for Ali. Ali believed that a people are nothing without a sense of national belonging and he reinforced that with an identity card, a national name, national status (made legal through treaties) as well as close attention to family and finances. Furthermore, Ali reinforced the Moorish Nation through the development of an educational and legislative system. Then, he provided it with the symbols and philosophy of a nation. It is not prudent to define or label the Moors as Black (or Black Nationalist for that matter) because of how they understand the word. Therefore, I argue that Moorish Nationalism is a type of Pan-African Nationalism only by virtue that the target audience of Ali was people of African descent. Consequently, the Moorish Nation stands alone as a unique manifestation of human cultural ingenuity.

**Synopsis**

Moorish Nationalism is multi-layered, drawing from a number of sources and presented in a variety of fashions. First, there is focused attention on the legal status of Moors, whereas they seek to be recognized as a sovereign nation that has made a peace treaty with the United States. The Moors then reinforce this treaty by declaring themselves citizens of the United States and carrying identification cards to demonstrate this fact. For Ali, the Moors are citizens of the United States and entitled to all rights and privileges therein, as well they are members of the Moorish Nation, which puts them above United States legislative power. Moorish citizenship is a powerful symbol that Ali provided for his nation. With that symbol, the Moors claim an ancient heritage as well as proclaim their right to be in the United States and be treated with dignity.

Ali further taught his nation the importance of family. While this is not a particularly unique aspect of human civilization, it is evidence that he meant for Moors to live and interact with other Moors, teach Moorish ways and raise Moorish children. How else would the Moorish Nation reproduce itself and continue through the generations? Furthermore, the symbols and history of the Moorish Nation are taught to Moorish children from a curriculum designed specifically for them. With all this, Ali provided the blueprint for the maintenance of the Moorish nation for generations to come.

Ali knew what African Americans needed to hear during the early twentieth century and provided it for them. This, for some, makes Ali an intelligent opportunist, but does not make him a prophet. Particularly, this is the case because much of Ali's writings may not have been his writings at all. He pulled from a variety of sources, including the Moroccan treaty (both to bolster his own image as well as to speak to the needs of African Americans at the time).

The Moorish Nation adheres to their ancient origin in an effort to strengthen their claim to the philosophical and religious space in the United States. Building upon that ancient foundation, the Moorish Nation developed its own interest of solidarity as well as dignity for African Americans. However, this nation is part of the rich legacy of resistance in the United States as African Americans attempted to build something different from the absurdity of their experience. Ali wanted more for African Americans than what the United States government was offering. He wanted African Americans to want more for themselves. So he provided a history, developed a nation, and he sculpted a belief system.
Chapter 3

Religious Foundations of the Moors

"So spirit-man as seed of Allah held deep within himself the attributes of every part of Allah."\(^{358}\)

There is much more to Moorish theological culture than al-Islam in the traditional sense.\(^{359}\) This chapter will focus on how the Moors define and understand Islam,\(^{360}\) which they call *Islamism*.\(^{361}\) What will be shown through this investigation is the uniqueness of the way the MSTA has interpreted and practiced their religion.\(^{362}\) Also, I will argue Noble Drew Ali was a product of the Islamic fervor of the early 20\(^{th}\) century. Moreover, despite the fact that Ali’s version of Islam did not resemble the traditional notion of al-Islam, he still endeavored to take advantage of the global zeitgeist concerning Islam.

This chapter will also explore Ali’s understanding of the Christ figure of Christianity. It is obvious throughout Ali’s writings that the Prophet of Islam, Mohammed, was not a major figure of inspiration. Ali centers his prepared sacred text

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\(^{359}\) Definition from: [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com) (accessed December, 2010). *al-Islam* is a Arabic variation of the word Islam with the definite article prefix *al-* which means *the*.

\(^{360}\) Tanya Gulevich, *Understanding Islam and Muslim Traditions: An Introduction to the Religious Practices, Celebrations, Festivals, Observances, Beliefs, Folklore, Customs, and Calendar System of the World’s Muslim Communities, Including and Overview of Islamic History and Geography* (Detroit: Omnigraphics, Inc., 2004).

\(^{361}\) M. E. Yapp, “Islam and Islamism” (review), (Routledge: Middle Eastern Studies, 2011), 161-182.

on the young adult life of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, between the ages of eighteen to thirty. It will be shown Ali believed Jesus came to this earth to save humanity from itself, a mission Ali himself had come to complete. I will argue Ali presented a type of Christology that was meant only to demonstrate his own (assumed) divinity.\footnote{363}

**Moorish Islam**

There is not much in Ali’s personal history to suggest that he was a practicing orthodox Muslim or devout Christian. However, the MSTA, as an expression and reflection of Ali, shares some cultural practices and habits with Muslims and Christians. For example, the Moors pray and believe in the same God-force (Allah) as well as the Abrahamic prophets (Jesus and Mohammed). Ali, in the preface to his *Holy Koran* writes, “The reason these lessons have not been known is because the Moslems of India, Egypt and Palestine knew these secrets and kept them back from the outside world, and when the time appointed by Allah came they loosened the keys and these secrets, and for the first time in ages have these secrets been delivered in the hands of Moslems of America.”\footnote{364} For him “Moslem” is not simply a designation given to the followers of Mohammed, but for all those who believe in Love, Truth, Peace, Freedom and Justice. So in that spirit, the MSTA is not to be understood as simply a Muslim or Christian organization or even a Fraternal Order. Nevertheless, all of those elements comprise the whole of the organization’s structure and understandings.

\footnote{363}{Definition from: http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/islamism (accessed December, 2010). Islamism is defined support or advocacy of Islamic fundamentalism.}

To provide more context, Pleasant-Bey argues "Moslem" is a designation which is not unique to the Arabic language. It, like the word moor, has ancient roots that speak to the origins and collective personality of the Moors. He explains:

'Moslem’ is an Arabic word and its English transliteration is ‘One Who Totally Submits The Will Of Man Into The Divine Will Of The Great God-Allah’. This definitions in the ‘Aramaic’ language (Arabic sister-language spoken by Jesus of the Israelites), and the Hebrew language as Moslem is interpreted as ‘A Christ’. In Sanskrit, the people of India’s name for Moslem are ‘Buddha’, ‘Guru Babaji’, or ‘Saint’. In Ancient Kemet, Moslem translates into ‘Adept Master’. In all the world, regardless of language the definition is distinctly the same.365

For the Moors, “Moslem” is a ubiquitous term, which feeds into their claim for omnipresence. However, this is not a wholly self-righteous claim, as the term means that there are a number of different holy traditions on the planet, which means there are Christians and Buddhists who are Moslem. To be Moslem, simply means one who submits to the will of Allah through the practice of the five tenets of Islamism: love, truth, peace, freedom and justice.366

This is the only way one can be “identified” as a Moslem.367 In the video recording “The Moorish,” the lecturer argues not everyone who claims to be a Moorish American National or Moslem is living life according to the tenets of Islamism.368 Further he states, a Moor will know a Moslem by “his faithfulness to Jesus, Mohammed and Drew Ali.” And if a person is not living the “life” then they are unidentifiable because they do not know their “status” as a Moorish American National. He goes on to

366 Ibid., 333.
368 Ibid. The speaker also claims that Moor and Moslem can be used interchangeably.
discuss the importance of practice for Moorish Americans. Meaning, to practice the 
tenets of Islamism, one must first love to find truth, which will give them peace. He 
states: one “cannot show commitment to God… without peace” and peace is the only 
way to be free from one’s own shortcomings and sinful ways.\(^{369}\) It is then and only then 
that a person can truly know justice.

Moreover, Islam for the MSTA can also be understood as an acronym that means 
I, Self Law And Master.\(^{370}\) This is a phrase that is focused on the laws and customs of 
Islamism, as well as the mastery of one’s higher self over one’s lower self. This points to 
the “science” of the Moorish Science Temple of America.\(^{371}\) More to the point, ancient 
Islam for the MSTA is a perfect form of spiritual knowledge for humanity and all other 
religions, including modern Islam in its various forms.\(^{372}\) Nance states, Islamism “was a 
timeless truth which had been called by other names until the life of Muhammad of 
Mecca in the seventh century when it acquired the name Islam.”\(^{373}\)

\(^{369}\) Ibid.
\(^{370}\) Video Lecture: “Moorish Science Slave Trade in the Americas” Part 2 of 19: 
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3ELFTChHK8&list=PLCD95F22295058A23&inde 
x=99 8 min. (accessed February, 2011).
\(^{371}\) Ibid., 
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3ELFTChHK8&list=PLCD95F22295058A23&inde 
x=99 7:30 min. (accessed February, 2011). This science is also referred to as the Science of Peace.
\(^{372}\) Ibid., 3 of 19: 
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILvNaVvCMU&feature=BFa&list=PLCD95F22295 
\(^{373}\) Susan B. Nance, “Moslem’s That Old Time Religion”: Moorish Science and 
The Meaning of Islam in the 1920s Black Chicago. (Toronto: Simon Fraser University, 
1996), 111.
This particular icon comes from Pleasant-Bey’s biography and is meant to encapsulate the essence of Islamism.\(^{375}\) At first glance, Ali’s belief system seems like a

\(^{374}\) "Islamism: The First Religious Creed":
misguided attempt to combine Eastern and Western thought, and infuse the mystery of his own life as part of an ancient mythology. More than that, the religious thought of the MSTA can be rather coded, which makes it is easily dismissed by those who simply do not “get” what Ali is trying to tell the world. Nance explains: “on first inspection Ali’s religious teachings appear to be a perplexing jumble of ideas, symbols, and rituals drawn from disparate sources, namely American New Thought movements, black Spiritualism, African-American popular Orientalism, and the black fraternal tradition. Because the internal logic of Moorish Science is not readily apparent when the religion is taken out of context, most writers have misunderstood and criticized Ali’s.” Despite this, Ali’s understanding of Islam is unique and rather elaborate as he combines philosophy from a number of traditions.

As discussed by Pleasant-Bey, to be Moslem in the world can mean being from a variety of religious traditions. That is the meaning of the varied religious symbols that make up the four quadrants of the Moorish Islamism icon (Figure 7). This particular icon does not appear in any of Ali’s original writings. It is a recent design developed by Ali’s biographer Pleasant-Bey. So there is no way to know if Ali would have agreed with this

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377 Ibid., 102. The author continues, “Yet the internal logic behind Moorish Science is key to understanding why Noble Drew Ali attracted so many black involved in African American popular mysticism and black nationalist movements. His success as a religious leader shows his ideas were reasonable and compelling to a significant segment of Chicago’s black community, even though some African Americans nonetheless found Moorish Science strange or suspicious. Further, the prophet’s focus on both radical revision of world history and conservative elite morality and behavior was also responsible for his success as a prophet.”
particular representation of Islamism. However, there are other Moorish Americans who
do agree with this understanding. For example, in the video series entitled “Moorish
Science Slave Trade History in the Americas”, the symbols of I. S. L. A. M. are put in an
acronymistic form, which is to say each letter of the word Islam was replaced with a
religious symbol that speaks to the religious make up of Moorish Islam; like an acronym
only with symbols (See Figures 8-12).\footnote{Video Lecture: “Moorish Science Slave Trade History in the Americas,” part 3 of 19
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILvNaVvCMU&feature=BFa&list=PLCD95F22295058A23 45 min (accessed February, 2011).}

The “I” is represented by the crescent moon and star of al-Islam. The speaker did
not go into detail as to why each letter represented the religion that it did, he just simply
claimed that each of these religions was a “water-downed version” of Islamism as it is
known by the Moors.\footnote{Ibid.} The “S” is represented by the Eye of Heru encapsulated in a
pyramid structure. This symbol is meant to represent the mystery system of ancient
Kemet. The “L” is symbolized by the compass and square of the Freemason tradition.
This is a point that will receive more attention in the next chapter. The “A” represents
the Jewish religion symbolized by the Star of David and the “M” completes the form by
representing the Christian religion with a cross.
Figure 8: Crescent Moon and Star.  
Figure 9: Eye of Heru.
Figure 10: Compass and Square.
Figure 11: Star of David.
Figure 12: Christian Cross.

It is clear the icon designed by Pleasant-Bey (Figure 7) and the claims of the unknown speaker from the lecture series “Moorish Science Slave Trade History in the Americas” (Figures 8-12) are not in complete congruence. For instance, the southern most quadrants of Pleasant-Bey’s design represent the eastern religions of Buddhism and Confucianism (traditions not mentioned at all in the video recordings). Further, there is no symbolic representation of the Freemasonic or Kemetic mystery system in the design by Pleasant-Bey. However, despite this incongruence, it is clear both Pleasant-Bey and the speaker from the lecture series agree Moorish Islam is a multi-varied system that feeds into the various religious manifestations of the world. Pleasant-Bey states, “in the purest fruition of Being a Moslem there is no measurable distinction between its true status and that of a pure Jew, Catholic, Muslim, Yogi or Christian Scientist... since Islamism is the Mother of all Religions.”

To provide more context, according to the Moors, in the video lecture “Moorish Science Slave Trade History in the Americas,” there are two types of Islam that are recognized by the MSTA: an ancient and modern Islam (also known as Islamism and al-Islam respectively). Modern Islam begins with the life and works of the Prophet Muhammad; ancient Islam is much older and is focused around the teachings of the

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385 The letters of the word “Islam” are separated in this caption to line them up with the corresponding symbol according to the video lecture “Moorish Science Slave Trade History in the Americas.”
Egyptian (Kemetic) Adepts.\textsuperscript{388} It is important for the MSTA that the difference be understood and respected, because it is tied into their understanding of their origins and the origins of humanity. According to their own belief system, the Moors are the original humans and Islamism is the origin of science for the planet.\textsuperscript{389} Once again, ancient lineage is critical for Ali’s understanding of Islam. He states: “The Key of civilizations was and is in the hands of the Asiatic nations. The Moorish who were the ancient Moabites, and the founders of the Holy City of Mecca.”\textsuperscript{390} Furthermore, the Moors teach that al-Islam is not the invention of the Prophet Mohammad; instead it is a translation of the wisdom of the Egyptian Mystery System into the Arabic language by the Mohammad.\textsuperscript{391}

Still, “Islam” seems to define the Moors as an organization. For example, the word “Islam” is used by the Moors not only to identify their belief system but as a general greeting. This is a point that is not evident in any writings of Ali or any other Moor but it is something that can be witnessed in every audio and/or video broadcast by Moorish Americans. Without fail, Moorish Americans who may be a Grand Sheikh, an

\textsuperscript{388} Ibid.,
\textsuperscript{389} Ibid., Recording 1 of 19:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5B0B4mX611o&feature=BFa&list=PLCD95F22295058A23&index=BFa 2:30 min (accessed February, 2011).
\textsuperscript{390} Ibid., Chap. XLV: 2.
\textsuperscript{391} Elihu Pleasant-Bey, \emph{The Biography of Noble Drew Ali: The Exhuming of a Nation} (Memphis: Seven Seals Publications, 2004). All the major African Prophets taught a portion of Islam. Prophet Mohammed, descendant through the African seed of Hagar, perfected The Ancient Egyptian Mysteries, for the first time, into the Arabic language. The transliteration of the Ancient Mystery System, the world’s first Religious Creed, into a single Arabic expression is pronounced “Al-Islam” or “Islam”, meaning “Peace” in Arabic. To this day, over one billion Moslems refer to this Perfect Transliteration as “Quranic Arabic.
Adept or a lay Moorish researcher/lecturer greet their respective audiences with the word “Islam!” And those in attendance would respond in unison, “Islam!” - to acknowledge and return the sacred greeting.

Throughout particular presentations, the word ‘Islam’ is used as call-and-response to provide emphasis to the knowledge being shared. This is very similar to the use of the word “Amen” in Christian congregations, as Moorish lecturers insistently say “Islam!” to provide emphasis to their sermon and then wait for a response. And if the response is not strong enough, the speaker would ensure s/he had not lost their audience by asking “y’all still with me?” This makes it clear that the Moorish style of worship is very similar to many other African American styles of worship. One can simply argue this is the case because the Moors, being people of African descent, use call-and-response as one of many ways [people of African descent] express their connection to the spiritual/religious message they are receiving.\(^\text{392}\)

Moorish Islam is not meant to look like al-Islam, it is meant to be reflective of what Ali may have believed about world religion at the time. In that, he believed many of the world’s religions shared more commonalities than differences. Islam was just a word for him that spoke to that fact. As a concept, it was a way for him to connect to a major religious movement, which (seemingly) stood against European hegemony. As with the choice to focus on Moab ancestry, a nation that stood against the seemingly benevolent Israel, Ali centered on Islam because as a symbol it represented what was

\(^\text{392}\) Video Lecture: February 26, 2010 of Sheikh Emanuel C. Doctor-El. Subordinate Temple no. 13; 15 North Manning Blvd. Albany, New York. Further, from review in the various videos and recording that have and circulating the world wide web, it is difficult to distinguish the tempo and preaching styles of Moor from their Christian counterparts, save for the content of the rhetoric.
tangential to the Western world. Islam was from the east: exotic, mysterious and in the minds of some, evil. Ali understood the image [the East] represented but he either did not believe it or did not agree with it. In response he co-opted the word and image of Islam to give African Americans a different understanding of Islam and themselves.

**Islamic Zeitgeist**

This section will analyze Islam in America as a manifestation of increased attention to global culture. I will argue Ali was impacted by the growing focus on Islam and the 'East' in general by American society. It is true that American propaganda dealing with the so-called Orient was exotic and rather sensationalized; however, for many who were on the margins of American society, Islam (specifically) and the Orient (in general) became symbols of separation from Western culture. Islam, then became signified as 'other' and meant different things to different people depending on one's experiential orientation. Ali focused on Islam as a symbol of freedom from white oppression, not only spiritually, but politically and socially.

The German term, zeitgeist, which means spirit of the times, describes the spiritual or psychological 'tone' of a given historic era. In other words, zeitgeist is meant to encapsulate the global spiritual consensus of humanity. For example, it can be argued, the zeitgeist of the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries was one focused on

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the dynamics of global colonization on the part of European powers. This is a theory worth exploration in the context of the growth of African American Islam. To put it simply, African Americans were affected by the global zeitgeist of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which directly contributed to the growth and development of Islam among African Americans in the United States.

Mohammad’s Yankee

The first recorded European American to convert to Islam is Mohammad Alexander Russell Webb. He made this conversion while working as the United States consul to the Philippines from 1887-1892, and he was known as the “Yankee Mohammedan.” President Grover Cleveland appointed Webb consul because he was already a budding political figure. Further, Muslims in India gave him the task of propagating Islam in the United States, which is also where he was exposed to the Ahmadiyya Islamic movement. As consul, Webb acted as a missionary for Islam in the United States by working out of the American Moslem Brotherhood establishment of New York City and by founding the Moslem World Publishing Company.

In 1893, Chicago hosted the World Columbian Exposition, which was arguably America’s first effort to closely examine the emerging global world. The exposition

\[\text{394} \quad \text{E. H. Tunison, } \text{Mohammed Alexander Russell Webb: First American Muslim} \quad \text{(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).}
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\[\text{396} \quad \text{Ibid., 64-65.}
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\[\text{397} \quad \text{G. L. Dybwad and Joy V. Bliss, } \text{Annotated Bibliography, World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago 1893: with illustrations and price guide} \quad \text{(Albuquerque: Book Stops Here, 1992). Justin Nordstrom, “Utopians at the Parliament: The World’s Parliament of Religions and the Columbian Exposition of 1893”} \quad \text{Journal of Religious History, 33}
\]
featured the world’s cultures displayed in various forms of art, religion, philosophy, as
well as themed shows of American Western expansion, gypsies, magicians, exotic
animals, plants and foods. It was so large that exhibitionists organized themselves into
smaller congresses and/or parliaments that focused on specific phenomena. One such
parliament was the World Parliament of Religions and it was here that the Mohammad’s
Yankee would present himself. 399

While it was rumored Webb was an Ahmadi and brought the philosophy to the
United States, official records do not place the Ahmadis in the United States until the first
quarter of the twentieth century. The official establishment of the Ahmadis was made
through Mufti Muhammad Sadiq when he was sent to Philadelphia from England to be a
missionary for the movement in the United States. Sadiq was sent despite “anti-Hindoo”

398 Abd-Allah, Umar F., Muslim in Victorian America: The Life of Alexander
Russell Webb (Cary: Oxford University Press, 2006), 16. It was late summer 1893. The
Chicago World’s Fair had reached its final weeks. One of the most imposing of all such
fairs, it transformed Chicago into an oasis of “wonders and miracles,” as if the city had
been reborn like a phoenix from the ashes of the Great Fire of 1871. At center stage stood
one of the great events of the nineteenth century: the First World’s Parliament of
Religions, a major watershed in American cultural history. The parliament set out to
foster religious pluralism to a degree largely unprecedented in the American experience.
It captivated enthusiastic audiences with lectures on the world’s major religious
traditions. For the most part, these presentations were delivered by articulate adherents of
Eastern faiths, who came from abroad and were born into the traditions they presented.
The presentation on Islam was the exception. Islam’s official representative at the
parliament was Mohammed Alexander Russell Webb, a prominent native-born American
convert to the faith and leader of one of the earliest Islamic movements on American soil.
399 Council for a Parliament of World Religions:
hostility that had spread across the United States and threatened the lives and sovereignty of many persons of Asiatic descent.  

Webb presented himself as a Western representative of the Islamic religion, particularly the Ahmadiyya brotherhood out of India, which was a radical sect within the ranks of al-Islam. Beyond the significance of Webb at the Exposition, the fact that the World’s Fair was well attended by people from across the planet speaks to its importance, as “a huge showcase of mechanical, architectural, and cultural displays.”

The Ahmadi movement is important to the evolution of Islam in America because of its ability to attract African American and European American members. Further, the ideology of the Ahmadis shares a certain kinship to the MSTA’s ideology, particularly with its’ interpretation of the life and times of Jesus of Nazareth. The Ahmadis “sought to rejuvenate Islam by arguing for the validity of its principles in the context of the increasing threat posed by the Hindu majority and the Christian

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400 Abd-Allah, Umar F., *Muslim in Victorian America: The Life of Alexander Russell Webb* (Cary: Oxford University Press, 2006), 117. “In 1917, widespread hostility against Asians in the United States resulted in the passage of the Oriental Exclusion Act, which excluded all laborers from the ‘Asiatic Barred Zone’ (Arabia, Afghanistan, India, Indochina, the East Indies and other Asian nations. The Johnson Act of 1921 established strict annual quotas for Asian immigrants, and finally the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 closed the door to most non-Europeans immigrants by setting up a ‘national origins system’ that gave North and West Europeans a huge advantage over the other groups.”

401 Ibid., 64-65. According to Turner, Webb’s association with the Ahmadis was tenuous but noteworthy because of the time he spent in India (the founding location for the Ahmadi movement) and his attempt to synthesize Islam and Hindu philosophy.


403 Richard B. Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 110. Ghulam Ahmad founded the movement to present a different view of Islamic and Christian theology which would come to attract great violence to its members. To add insult to injury (from the perspective of orthodox Islam) he claimed to be a Mahdi or Messianic figure who was sent to perform a jihad of words instead of blood in order to revive the Islamic faith
missionaries in the Punjab."404 One issue with their theology was the belief in "continuous prophecy," which is simply the idea that there were more prophets after Muhammad, a deeply heretical thought for "orthodox" Muslims.405 The heresy did not stop with Islam as the Ahmadis claimed Jesus Christ did not die on a cross but rather survived his experience in the Middle East and made his way to India to continue his learning and teaching of God's sacred word.406 These ideas also seemed to be popular amongst Christians at the time as Levi Dowling wrote on similar issues in his The Aquarian Age Gospels of Jesus, the Christ of the Piscean Age, published in 1908.407

However, the xenophobia of United States society did not keep African Americans from joining either the Ahmadis or other Pan-Islamic movements like the MSTAs. If anything, it fueled the fire of their conversion, in that it validated the perceived hypocrisy of United States society and Christianity, as African Americans had already spent centuries at the business end of the American "whip" and in the process

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404 Ibid., 111. The Ahmadis were successful in providing a multi-racial institution of Islam in which to worship, that is a tradition that was not boggled down by the racial ideology which formed the foundations of the MSTAs and NOI. However, it is this very racial identity or even ethos which defined and shaped African American Islamic theology into what it is, an organization whose mission was to uplift descendents of enslaved Africans out of ignorance.

405 Ibid., 112. Further, in his publications, Fath-I Islam, Izala-y Aw ham, and Tawzih-I Maram, Ahmad, made bold claims that would make his followers the targets of sever violence by Hindis, Christians and Muslims.

406 Ibid., 112-113.

407 Levi Dowling, The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ: The Philosophical and Practical Basis of the Religion of the Aquarian Age of the World (Santa Monica: DeVorss & Co., Publishers; 1972). The zeitgeist of this period was not simply focused on colonization as a factor for the increased attention to the Islamic religion, but also during this time Christianity itself was being rethought. Specifically, certain groups and individuals questioned the lessons to be gleaned from the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Theories began to be shared that Jesus' was more than just a Christian icon, but a prophet in a long continuation tradition of prophets who were brought to earth to address the spiritual destiny of humanity.
become disillusioned with the religion of their oppressors. Islam represented all that: Christianity was not: cultural plurality, religious justice and philosophic clarity.

Again, the thrust of Eastern thought in the Western world seems to represent a push towards independence not only in the colonies throughout the world, but in the minds and hearts of those at the end of the colonizers’ yoke. Webb became an advocate for the religion of Islam, but more appropriately he became an advocate for the freedom to participate in a non-western cultural tradition. In a country that privileged Protestant Christian thought and cultural sensibilities, Webb was bold with his adherence to the Islamic tradition. His very presence was very impressionable to the global zeitgeist.

Subsequently, there are others within the American cultural landscape who fought for cultural sovereignty and unity for the world’s oppressed people. Duse Mohamed Ali is one such individual, as he taught African Americans the struggles of their brethren and sistren across the world who were also being enslaved by a European oppressor. It can be argued, the end of the nineteenth century (through the efforts of industrialization, colonization, global trade, the increase in global conflicts and migration) represents the beginnings of globalization the current world population is just now witnessing the conclusions of. This perspective adds context to the increased advocacy of liberation for non-western cultures by America’s own migrant (involuntary and voluntary) populations.

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408 Mustafa Abdelwahid, Duse Mohamad Ali: 1866-1945: The Autobiography of a Pioneer Pan-African and Afro-Asian Activist (Trenton: Red Sea Press, 2011), xi. “Duse Mohamed Ali’s story is truly remarkable one in its own right. Born of an Egyptian father and a Sudanese mother in 1866, Duse Mohamed Ali received his early education in England before returning to Egypt in 1882. Left on his own at the age of 16, he made his way back to England where he first embarked upon a career as an actor. Soon, however, his interests turned to journalism and political activism. His long and active career spanned three continents, taking him for considerable periods to Europe, America and West Africa.”
because the oppressed populations of America could now look abroad to those who shared their struggle for support and camaraderie.

Duse Ali claimed to be an Egyptian migrant who was of Arab and Ethiopian ancestry and was very influential in the global movement of Islam and Pan-Africanism.\textsuperscript{409} He mentored Marcus Garvey for a brief period while he studied at Birkbeck College in 1912.\textsuperscript{410} As Duse Ali’s mentee, Garvey worked on his publication \textit{African Times and Orient Review}, a journal addressing issues related to Pan-Africanism and Islamism.\textsuperscript{411} This publication was a forerunner to \textit{Negro World}, a Pan-African publication started by Garvey in 1918. Garvey, despite being Anglican Christian, was heavily influenced by the nationalistic movement of Muslims throughout the world. It is this influence that connects Garvey to the historical development of African American Islam, because this influence fostered the ideologies Garvey taught, ideologies that would be recognized by Timothy Drew.\textsuperscript{412}

Duse Ali was truly a man of his time with his eyes on future generations of migrants and marginal populations. Mustafa Abdel Wahid, author of the text \textit{Duse Mohamad Ali: 1866-1945: The Autobiography of a Pioneer Pan-African and Afro-Asian Activist}, elaborates:

\begin{footnotes}
\item[411] Ibid., 83. “The rationale and the purpose of Duse Muhammad Ali’s African Times and Orient Review was to make a case for the unification of Pan-Africanist and Pan-Islamic discourses in America, Europe, Africa, and Asia, and central to the journal’s vision was the theme of signification and identity.” Michael Gomez, \textit{Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas} (Cambridge University Press; Cambridge, 2005), 259.
\item[412] Ibid., 84-85.
\end{footnotes}
During the last half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century large numbers of African and Asian students, businessmen and intellectuals came to study, live and work in the United Kingdom. Despite the differences in their ethnicities, religious beliefs, and histories, they all shared the same aspirations and hopes of ending British occupation of their homelands and creating new independent or self-governing states in which they could play a role. They dreamed of a brighter future for their people, a future in which new generations of Africans and Asians alike could come together to tackle the problems of underdevelopment, political structure, economic challenges, and basic rights... he was a major force in the establishment of the several Pan-African, Afro-Asian and Pan-Islamic political, social, and solidarity organizations.\textsuperscript{413}

This passage addresses the collective nature of the struggle Duse Ali and many others like him were born into. This passage also demonstrates his position as a precursor to the development of Pan-African thought from the early twentieth century. The primary method with which Duse Ali was able to make an impact in the Afro-Asiatic world was through the written and spoken word. Early in his career, two publications in particular earned him international notoriety, his book, \textit{In the Land of the Pharaohs} and the journal, \textit{The African Time and Orient Review (ATOR)}.\textsuperscript{414}

Both of these publications are the first owned by a person of African descent in England.\textsuperscript{415} The \textit{Land of the Pharaohs} earned the attention of both Western and Oriental academics and thinkers. However, it was the \textit{ATOR}\textsuperscript{416} that would be “a Pan-Oriental, Pan-African journal at the seat of the British Empire which would lay the aims, desires

\textsuperscript{413} Ibid., 1.
\textsuperscript{414} Ibid., 7-18.
\textsuperscript{415} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{416} Ibid., 12. “ATOR was published as a monthly magazine from July 1912 to December 1913, and from March 24, 1914 to August 19, 1914 as a weekly. During World War I the magazine cease publication, then returned as a monthly magazine between 1917 and October 1918. The magazine again cease publication for about a year, resuming as a monthly between January and December 1920, with a slightly modified name, \textit{The Africa and Orient Review (AOR)}.}
and intentions of the Black, Brown and Yellow Races – within or without the Empire – at the throne of Caesar.”\textsuperscript{417} This publication circulated the world and brought together diverse voices to address the political and cultural issues of the world’s oppressed colonies.\textsuperscript{418} In 1921, Duse “was appointed as ‘foreign affairs specialist’ for Garvey’s \textit{Negro World}, for which he also reviewed books and plays. Duse also served for a while as the Foreign Secretary to the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and accepted a position with the UNIA as Head of African affairs.”\textsuperscript{419} His skills as a journalist made him a prominent figure in Black intelligentsia, but his experience in the British colonies fueled the fire of his activism. As an African national, he had a unique perspective on the African struggle against the British Empire.

Abdelwahid argues Noble Drew Ali was influenced more by the Ahmadi movement than Duse Mohamed Ali.\textsuperscript{420} This is a curious perspective given the claims that Mohamed Ali greatly influenced Garvey while, in his \textit{Holy Koran}, Drew Ali claimed Garvey as his divine predecessor.\textsuperscript{421} In chapter Forty-eight of the \textit{Holy Koran}, Ali states: “In these modern days there came a forerunner, who was divinely prepared by the great God-Allah and his name is Marcus Garvey, who did teach and warn the nations of the

\textsuperscript{417} \textit{African Time and Oriental Review} (1912): 1.


\textsuperscript{419} Ibid., 19.

\textsuperscript{420} Ibid., 25.

earth to prepare to meet the coming Prophet." While the Columbian Exposition happened well before Ali was seen in Chicago, I argue Ali was greatly affected by the tone of world events and phenomena, which included the efforts of Garvey.

It is quite speculative, but perhaps this is what accounts for the mystery of his early life. Maybe Ali was an orphan because of mistreatment from his family at an early age. As readers will recall, Moorish lore says he left North Carolina around the age of six or seven, curiously around the year the Exposition took place in Chicago in 1893. And maybe he did meet a band of gypsies, perhaps traveling with the Exposition, who exposed him to many different cultural phenomena and cultural knowledge. Perhaps with the gypsies he got his hands on certain texts and overheard certain conversations that he later organized into the philosophy and theology of the MSTA. This again is all speculation, but the idea is to provoke the imagination to wonder just how Ali knew what he knew.

Beyond the speculation, it is more likely Ali attached himself to the idea that Islam was a movement meant to connect people to an ideal based in the liberation of the world's "colored" population. Because of the lack of Ali's own writing the limited evidence suggests Ali may have simply been caught up in the fervor of his time. He responded by organizing the MSTA because during the late 19th and early 20th centuries Islam served as a symbol of freedom for many oppressed populations and was seen as a force which could stand up to Europe's cultural hegemony and provide a foundation for which to unify. This made the religion of Islam very attractive to those struggling for

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freedom throughout the Western Hemisphere, including Ali and his following. Therefore, I argue Islam at this period in history was not merely a religious tradition but a social and political symbol that influenced Ali.

Moorish Islam is a unique manifestation or a unique interpretation of what Islam means to African Americans. African Americans who migrated from the South were not just looking for a new location, but also new understandings of what it means to be black and spiritual. Noble Drew Ali took advantage of this situation. Nance explains, “Noble Drew Ali named the resulting belief system ‘Islam’, drawing on black perceptions of the religion. The black press and oral tradition described Islam as an ancient religion shared by many Africans whose adherents taught racial equality. Thus, to many African Americans, Islam was the ‘old time religion’ of black ancestors in ancient Egypt and the Holy Land.” But again, Ali was not just meaning to present Islam to a black audience and convince them it was an African religion, he wanted to change what Islam meant theologically and philosophically.

**Christian Koran**

Symbolism focused around Islam is only one part of the religious make-up of the MSTA. Symbols of Christianity are also replete throughout Moorish theology, particularly the Christ figure. Further, the narratives on the Christ are alleged (according to the Moors) to be Ali’s original thoughts and ideas. However, there are many, particularly in the academic community, who argue Ali’s writings are not his own, but those of Christian Scientist Levi Dowling. Therefore, much of this section will focus on comparison

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424 Ibid., 99.
between the writings of Levi Dowling and Noble Drew Ali. It will be clear the narratives are very similar but also have blaring differences that must be noted.

In part, this is an effort to determine why Ali presented the chapters and verses he did, and why he left the rest. Attempts to answer this question will only provide details as to Ali’s own purpose in forming the MSTA. The relevance of the *Aquarian Gospel* (for Ali) is demonstrated by his choice in using this text and not the Islamic Qur’an, the King James Version of the Bible, or a number of other religious writings. Instead, he finds Dowling’s text most relevant. Further, what will come of this is a unique Christology that serves as the major thrust of MSTA’s movement.

The *Holy Koran* of the MSTA presents a very interesting nexus of theology. It is also a deviation of the spelling of the al-Islamic *Holy Qur’an*, even though the object of this work is to present information on the life and times of Jesus the Christ during the years of his life that are missing from the King James Version of the Bible. Further, the *Holy Koran* as presented by Noble Drew Ali is a version (or effort in plagiarism for some)\(^{425}\) of Levi Dowling’s *The Aquarian Gospels of Jesus the Christ*. Nance elaborates: “the first half of the Koran came from a book associated with the New Thought movement which experienced a revival during the inter-war period. This work, *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*, first published in 1908 in London and 1909 in Los Angeles, was one of a series of books which told the story of the mystical Jesus.”

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\(^{425}\) Ibid., 114. The *Holy Koran* is not a plagiaristic effort. The majority of the chapters are from Dowling’s initial work, but Ali chose certain ones that he felt were most relevant. Further, he changed certain words around. For instance, the word “God” is replaced by the word “Allah” throughout Ali’s version. Moreover, the end of the Holy Koran presents the “Holy Instructions” from the Holy Prophet, which is not in the Dowling’s work at all.
However, I argue Ali’s version was compiled with purpose and intent as he chose certain chapters and verses to put into his *Holy Koran*.\footnote{Ibid., 113. An interesting note from the author that “no one seems to have noticed until the 1940s when academics at the Harford Theological Seminary accidentally identified his writings as having been plagiarized, almost entirely from two other works.”}

Further, the pattern of spiritual writers or leaders “plagiarizing” each other’s work is not unique to Noble Drew Ali. Nance argues, Dowling himself may have gotten his ideas or even his writings from another work entitle *La Vie Inconnu de Jesus Christ*, by Nicholas Notovitch.\footnote{Ibid., 117. Another possible influence for Ali would be *The Mystical Life of Jesus* by H. Spencer Lewis.} She states: this book like the *Aquarian Gospel* and Ali’s *Holy Koran* “is but one in a series of popular retellings of Jesus apocrypha, each explaining itself as the product of travel to the exotic mystical lands of Asia. One finds in all these accounts the same basic structure, namely voyages undertaken by spiritually-adept Westerners to points East where they discover ancient pure wisdom previously overlooked or suppressed by conventional Christian theologians.”\footnote{Ibid., 117-118. According to the author Ali may have also been influence by the Ahmadiyya book *The Tomb of Jesus*.} It is more than possible for Ali to have been following his contemporaries and simply acquiescing to the spirit of the times (perhaps a prophetic *zeitgeist*). Through the development of Islamism, Ali simply put together the theology and philosophy of the MSTI with pieces of what he witnessed in contemporary Chicago society, from the establishment of a unique but ancient ethnic identity to the reinterpretation of Jesus’ life and ministry.

Before delving into issues related to what is in the *Holy Koran*, first we must discuss the use of the word “Koran.” That is to say, why would Ali name the Koran in such a way when the work itself has more to do with Christianity than al-Islam? Simply,
it is a record of Jesus’ life, not Mohammed. African Americans were somewhat familiar with the Qur’an, particularly in the Chicago area, because of the presence of the Ahmadi. They were known to pass out English translations of the Qur’an, which would have been highly accessible on the streets of Chicago and “Noble Drew Ali could have presented his followers with the Qur’an if he chose to do so.” However, African Americans were much more familiar with the Bible and even more familiar with Jesus Christ, so perhaps Ali simply wanted to work within the comfort zone of the majority of African Americans. Despite the growing presence of Muslims, despite the global zeitgeist, Islam was still a mystery to the masses of African Americans. Nance remarks, “the Qur’an was largely unknown to Americans, who would have been unfamiliar with the context in which it was revealed and had no local tradition or interpretation to which to refer.”

Therefore, to focus on biblical symbols and icons, such as Moabites and Jesus, would be congruent with the religious lexicon of the majority of African Americans, which may have made conversion easier. There is no indication of just how familiar Ali was with the al-Islamic religion or the Qur’an (this may also explain the spelling of Koran as opposed to Qur’an). Ali may have simply co-opted popular beliefs about Islam, such as it was a non-white religion or that it was a religion still within the Abrahamic bloodline, and filled in the details of that belief system with what he found in the New

\begin{itemize}
\item[429] Ibid., 107.
\item[430] Ibid., 107.
\item[431] Ibid., 108.
\item[432] Ibid., 108. According to the author, “Ali may also have known that the Bible is considered by Muslims to have been an earlier revelation of the Qur’an, but still a valid one.” An interesting point since Islam is considered an Arabic translation of the “old time religion” of the Moors.
\end{itemize}
Thought tradition of Dowling's writings. It is not clear what his exact motivations were, but it seems to hold that Ali had many influences in the development of Moorish theology.

Levi Dowling\textsuperscript{433} was a young Scottish prodigy in the Christian Arts (teaching and interpreting the religion) and became a preacher at the age of sixteen, holding a pastoral office by eighteen.\textsuperscript{434} As a student at the Northwestern Christian University, he began to write and publish Church lessons for Sunday school and children's ministry, as well as songbooks.\textsuperscript{435} The writing of this unique gospel was the pinnacle of his publishing efforts. However, his efforts or desire to create this alternative view of the Christ figure was not a particularly unique \emph{modes operandi} of his time evidenced by the efforts of the Ahmadis. Ali is part of this movement, ecumenical in nature, in which many Americans were searching (or researching) differing and alternative interpretations of ancient ideologies and texts.

\textsuperscript{433} Levi Dowling, \textit{The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ: The Philosophical and Practical Basis of the Religion of the Aquarian Age of the World} (Santa Monica, Ca: DeVorss \& Co., Publishers; 1972), 14. According to the editors, Levi "has been close student of the religions of the world from childhood. When but a boy he was impressed with the sensitiveness of the finer ethers and believed that in some manner they were sensitised plate on which sounds even thoughts are recorded. With avidity he entered into the deeper studies of etheric vibration, determined to solve the great mysteries of the heavens for himself. Forty years he spent in silent meditation, that then he found himself in that stage of spiritual consciousness that permitted him to enter the domain of these superfine ethers and become familiar with their mysteries. He then learned that the imaginings of his boyhood days were founded upon veritable facts, and that every thought of every living thing is there recorded."


\textsuperscript{435} Ibid., 7.
According to Pleasant-Bey, when Noble Drew Ali was young he was given sacred
texts to study so that he would one day fulfill his destiny and bring the holy message to
Allah’s chosen people. Speaking on Ali’s younger life Pleasant-Bey writes,

During the next seven years Sharif was given many sacred texts
revealing the creation of all worlds, the history of the Angels and the origin
of the human family, the true story of all the prophets, sages and master
minds and how to go within a council with them at will, they never die. He
was taught of his many other missions to the earth as Adam, Solomon,
Jesus and Mohammed: given the complete enlightenment of Confucius and
the Ancient Kemetian Mystery System of ‘7 – the Perfection of Man.’ He
affixed to memory every word, works and deeds; most of which he later
placed in his ‘Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple’; this little Book
is sometimes called, ‘The Circle Seven Koran.’

This was embarked upon after Ali’s return from Mecca and given the name Sharif and
the title Sheikh according to legend. The information was said to be the wisdom of the
ancestors that was only for the eyes of spiritual adepts. Revealed in this is the theory of
reincarnation. Timothy Drew was in the same spiritual lineage of prophets of the
Abrahamic traditions. According to Moorish folklore, Noble Drew Ali is a reincarnated
prophet, who visited this planet several times before and (seemingly) always for a very
important purpose. If these words are aligned with Dowling’s, Ali’s reincarnations are
corresponded with the coming of the Ages, particularly the Taurean (Adam), Arian
(Moses) and the Piscean (Jesus) with Ali being the Prophet of the Aquarian Age.

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436 Elihu Pleasant-Bey, *Exhuming a Nation: Biography of Nobel Drew Ali* (Memphis: Seven Seal Publication, 2004), 4. “Noble Drew Ali received his Islamic name of heritage from the Great Sultan Abdule Aziz Ibu Saud in the Holy City of Mecca. He was exalted from the western birth name of Timothy Drew to the attribute of ‘Sharif Abdul Ali.’

437 Ibid., 5.

The study of ancient wisdom Ali undertook was done while he was overseas between Mecca and Egypt. Upon his return to the United States he was apparently questioned about the texts he traveled with:

Drew Ali later told the Moors in the U.S., “I got here, just in time, just before the fire. I had to come like a thief in the night because the Europeans were looking for me with airplanes and with dreadnoughts. When I arrived in the U.S., they asked me, ‘Where are all those books you have?’ Ali just smiled. But then the time was right he went to the printer and transcribed every word of the Holy Koran from memory. The printer was amazed. Noble Drew Ali had returned from the east and arrived by ship in the Port of New York. It was the spring of 1912.\(^{439}\)

As opposed to Dowling’s experience of being visited by the Goddess Visel,\(^ {440}\) Ali’s story of how he obtained the knowledge he published was done in a much more “earthly” fashion. Ali was never contacted by a supernatural being as Dowling was; he instead got his information and training from other humans.

The narrative presented by Dowling is said to have come from the Akashic\(^ {441}\) Records.\(^ {442}\) The significance of the Akashic Records is that they are the ‘heavenly records’ that come directly from conversations between Angels, Gods and Goddesses.

According to the editors of the *Aquarian Gospel*, the Akashic Records are “the

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\(^{440}\) Levi Dowling, *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ: The Philosophical and Practical Basis of the Religion of the Aquarian Age of the World* (Santa Monica, Ca: DeVoiss & Co., Publishers; 1972), 18-19. Susan B. Nance, “Mostem’s That Old Time Religion”: Moorish Science and The Meaning of Islam in the 1920s Black Chicago. (Toronto: Simon Fraser University, 1996), 114. The most famous interpreter of the Akashic record was Edgar Cayce, the noted clairvoyant, renowned primarily for his healing powers, but also know to have received reading from the Universal Mind similar to that found in the Aquarian Gospel.” So it seems that Dowling may have “borrow” from other writers.

\(^{441}\) Ibid., 16. Akashic comes from the Sanskrit rood word Akasha which means primary substance.

\(^{442}\) Ibid., 9-19.
imperishable records of life... which are wholly in the domain of Supreme Intelligence, or Universal Mind, and the Akashic Record reader must be in such close touch with the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Breath, as the ancient masters call this spirit of Supreme Intelligence, that every thought vibration is instantly felt in every fibre of his being.”

More than that, Nance argues, “the Akashic record was key to New Thought understandings of the continuity of human history and the divine potential in each person.”

It is believed anyone could have access to the Akashic records if they were spiritually astute enough. This is why for Moors, it is completely understandable for Ali and Dowling to have almost the exact same writing, as they were both spiritually in-tune enough to receive the information. Pimienta-Bey refers to this phenomenon as being “part of the same continuum of ancient sources.” In Western academia such a theory is unacceptable because there is no hard evidence the Akashic records exist. Therefore, from an academic perspective the only “parts of the Koran we can be relatively sure Noble Drew Ali wrote himself are... found in the book’s one page introduction and the

443 Ibid., 17.
445 Video Lecture: “Moorish Science Slave Trade History in the Americas 3 of 19: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILvNaVvCMU&feature=BFa&list=PLCD95F22295058A23 (accessed February, 2011). In this recording the speaker as well agrees with the claim that many spiritual adepts had access to the Universal Mind records and that is what explains the many similarities between Dowling and Ali’s writing.
last four chapters.” This is where the examination of the *Holy Koran* will begin, with the *Introduction*, in order to decipher what Ali wrote and what he may have changed. The purpose is to understand the thinking behind Ali’s preparation of the *Holy Koran*.

**The Ages**

Within *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus, the Christ of the Piscean Age*, the concept of the “Piscean Age” signifies the procession of the equinoxes or “the movement of the sun through the signs of the Zodiac” in reverse order: Pisces, Aquarius, Capricorn, Sagittarius, Scorpio, Libra, Virgo, Leo, Cancer, Gemini, Taurus and Aries. The ages or equinoxes in this context represent the span of time it takes our sun to revolve around the central galactic sun, which is twenty six thousand years. In the process of this revolution our solar system travels through the signs of the zodiac in reverse order. Passage through these signs represents very significant periods of time for human beings.

Dowling argues “the sun entered the zodiacal sign Taurus in the days of our historic Adam when the Taurian Age began; Abraham lived not far from the beginning of the Arian Age, when the sun entered the sign Aries. About the time of the rise of the Roman empire the sun entered the sign Pisces, the Fishes and the Piscean Age began, so that early in this Age Jesus of Nazareth lived.” Theoretically, as humanity moves backward through these Ages, they grow and evolve spiritually to reach perfection.

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450 Ibid., 9.
451 Ibid., 9-10.
Further, each of these Ages is roughly two thousand years, which means the Piscean Age, the age of Jesus the Christ, is almost over and the Aquarian Age is about to begin.

According to Dowling, the Piscean Age, symbolized by water, represents humanity’s attempt to navigate through the turbulent waters of life; the Aquarian age, symbolized by air, represents humanity’s freedom through mastery of the air. The Aquarian age is important for Dowling because it “is pre-eminently a spiritual age, and the spiritual side of the great lessons that Jesus gave to the world.”452 The closer humanity gets to the end of the age, the more clearly the multitude of people will understand this and live out a more spiritual life like Jesus the Christ. They will thereby be able to live more complete and fulfilling lives. This is why Jesus is important to the overall trajectory of Dowling’s writing.

Ali does not offer any discussion of the Ages in his *Holy Koran*; this is another blaring difference between the two prepared writings. As a Christian Scientist, Dowling apparently felt the constellations had a message for humanity. Ali does not show the same interest. There are other differences that will illuminate themselves, but this demonstrates that Ali, if he did borrow from Dowling’s writing, did not see the relevance of this information for his Moorish Nation. Again, that is why it is difficult to merely accept the assumption that Ali simply stole the writings of others.

The Introduction of Levi’s work is separated in to three sections: *The Cusp of the Ages, The Christ* and *Levi’s Commission*.453 The first section is focused on the changing of the Ages and what it means for humanity. This section features a conversation

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452 Ibid., 10-11.
453 Ibid., 9-19.
between angels, twenty-four of them, who were masters of this particular solar system.\textsuperscript{454} Dowling reports: "and then I heard the Aquarian Cherubim and Seraphim proclaim the Gospel of the coming Age, the age of Wisdom, of the Son of Man."\textsuperscript{455} As mentioned earlier, this new Aquarian Age would bring spiritual wisdom to humanity, wisdom not yet experienced on this planet.

The second section, \textit{The Christ}, is focused on the actual catalyst for this new age of humanity.\textsuperscript{456} For Dowling, The Christ and Jesus of Nazareth are two wholly different entities that merely occupied the same space and time on earth in order to achieve a particular purpose: the preparation of humanity for the Aquarian Age. From the Akashic records Dowling reports: "Before creation was the Christ who walked with the Father God and Mother in Akasha... Christ is the Logos of Infinites and through the word alone are Thought and Force made manifest."\textsuperscript{457} For the child from Nazareth, "Jesus was an ideal Jew, born in Bethlehem of Judea. His mother was a beautiful Jewish girl named Mary."\textsuperscript{458} 'The Christ' is a title meaning 'anointed one'\textsuperscript{459} that was given to Jesus after he served his purpose of this planet.

The third section is focused on Levi's mission to spread this \textit{Gospel} to the masses.\textsuperscript{460} This message was passed to Dowling by the Goddess of wisdom named Visel who said, "O Levi, son of man, behold for you are called to be the message bearer of the coming of age – the age of spirit blessedness." The Goddess continues:

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{454} Ibid., 11.
\textsuperscript{455} Ibid., 11.
\textsuperscript{456} Ibid., 12-14.
\textsuperscript{457} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{458} Ibid., 13.
\textsuperscript{459} Ibid., 13.
\textsuperscript{460} Ibid., 15-19.
\end{flushleft}
Twelve times in every revolution of the sun this Christ Love of God is made full manifest in flesh upon the planes of earth, and you may read in the Akasha the wondrous lessons that these Christ have taught to men; but you shall publish not to men the lessons of the Christ’s of ancient times. Now, Levi, message bearer of the Spirit Age, take up you pen and write. Write full the story of The Christ who built upon the Solid Rock of yonder circle of the sun – the Christ who men have known as Enoch the Initiate. Rite of his works as prophet, priest and seer; write of his life of purity and love, and how he changed his carnal flesh to flesh divine without descending through the gates of death.461

So, it was ordained by Visel that Dowling was to deliver this message of spiritual evolution via the Aquarian Gospel. Moreover, the folklore around the Aquarian Gospel reveals Dowling’s access to information or relation to divine beings. However, it also reveals a certain relationship between Dowling and the text itself in that it demonstrates a desire to have a deeper understanding on the being-ness of Jesus the Christ.462

The last part of Levi’s Commission is a discussion of ‘Man’s’ relationship to ‘God.’463 This is the section Ali chose for Chapter One of his Holy Koran entitled “The Creation and the Fall of Man.”464 Within Ali’s version, the only difference in the text is that the word ‘God’ is replaced by the word ‘Allah.’465 This change is merely to acknowledge the symbolic importance of Islamic motif, as the words essentially mean the same thing, and they are used in the exact same context throughout Ali’s text without fail.

461 Ibid., 15.
462 By this I am referring to Christology, which will be discussed in the last section of the chapter.
Furthermore, in Ali’s version there is another difference in semantics that may be of interest: the word ‘Fiat’ is replaced by the word ‘Fate.’\footnote{Ibid., 4-5.} For example, in discussing the nature of the soul of man Dowling states, “Creative Fiat gave to man, to spirit man, a soul that he might function on the plane of soul; gave him a body of the flesh, that he might function on the plane of things made manifest.”\footnote{Levi Dowling, \textit{The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ: The Philosophical and Practical Basis of the Religion of the Aquarian Age of the World} (Santa Monica, Ca: DeVorss & Co., Publishers; 1972), 17.} Ali’s version states, “Creative Fate…” and continues in the exact same fashion.\footnote{Elihu Pleasant-Bey, \textit{Exhuming a Nation: Biography of Nobel Drew Ali: Appendix}; Noble Drew Ali, \textit{The Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple of America} (Memphis: Seven Seal Publication, 2004), 4.} The difference in the words is wide enough to take notice. \textit{Fiat} is authoritative decree usually given by royal or divine beings; \textit{fate} is more akin to destiny. What is the connection and why the change? It can be argued, fate is a type of fiat, that is one’s fate has been predetermined by a more authoritative source,\footnote{Susan B. Nance, \textit{“Moslem’s That Old Time Religion”}; \textit{Moorish Science and The Meaning of Islam in the 1920s Black Chicago}. (Toronto: Simon Fraser University, 1996), 120. The author remarks on this change stating, “we can only speculate on the meaning of changes such as these, though obviously Ali felt the term ‘Fate’ articulated his own ideas more precisely than ‘Fiat.’ However, considering Ali never made these changes or his use of Dowling’s work public, their significance to Ali will probably never be known.”} but aside from that there is no effort by Ali to explain the meaning of his narrative.

There are no other differences in the remainder of this first chapter of the \textit{Holy Koran}; everything is stated as it is in the Dowling text. As mentioned earlier, this is part of Levi’s Commission given to him by the Goddess of Wisdom, so what does this mean for Ali’s purpose in presenting this part of the gospel in his text? Was there a spiritual authority who gave Ali the information he presented? There is no mention of the
Goddess Visel in the Holy Koran. However, within both texts the following verse is repeated: “Hear, now, oh everything that is or was, or evermore will be, for Wisdom speaks from out the highest plane of spirit life.” This verse displays the word Wisdom as a capitalized proper noun that has the ability to speak. In the context of Dowling's writing this must be the Goddess Visel because this is who charged Dowling with his mission. But there is no indication that a similar charge was made to Ali, at least not by Visel. So the question remains, where does Ali get the motivation or at least fiat to present and teach the information of his Koran? The only possible answer is the Egyptian Adepts from Ali’s travels in the East.

Ali's Message

This section will continue with the comparison between the Gospel of Dowling and the Koran of Ali. In one respect this will be somewhat of a chapter-by-chapter comparison, but in the larger schema of this dissertation, this section will be an investigation of what Ali found relevant with the Gospel. As it will be shown, Ali had a very specific idea of the message he wanted to present to the Moorish Nation. While the Gospel and Koran seem to be very similar, what will become apparent is that they are two very different documents created for different reasons. For the most part, the chapters of Dowling’s that are not in Ali’s Koran include continued lessons on the dynamics of the men and women and human moods, the Brahmic religion, Jewish heritage, the precepts of Buddhism, Persian Religion, the meaning of sin and forgiveness, and the early education

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of John before the passing of his mother.\textsuperscript{471} The majority of these chapters go into detail about other religions that were taught by the sages.

Chapter One of Ali’s Holy Koran mirrors the last part of Dowling’s \textit{Introduction} to the \textit{Aquarian Gospel}; yet both claim to have received this word from outside sources who are either divinely inspired or divine themselves. However, the second chapter of Ali’s version corresponds with Chapter Seven of Dowling’s text.\textsuperscript{472} Ali did not include the part of the \textit{Gospel} that discussed Jesus’ birth and early life with his mother, Mary, who had to abscond to escape King Herod.\textsuperscript{473} Nor did he seem to find any use for the second section of the \textit{Gospel} dealing with the infancy of John the Harbinger who was also hunted down by King Herod because he was Jesus’ companion and ally.\textsuperscript{474} Ali instead focused on the early education that Mary and Elizabeth (mother of John) received from the ancient sages of esoteric knowledge.

It is possible Ali did not want to present certain lessons in order to place more emphasis on the Islamic religion. This argument would be hard to prove as Ali does include chapters dealing with the Hindu religion, not to mention the attention given to the Christ, the main icon of the Christian religion. The answer the Moors may give for the reason why certain chapters of the \textit{Gospel} do not appear in the \textit{Koran} would come down

\textsuperscript{474} Ibid., 34-38.
to inspiration or purpose. That is to say, for the Moors, what appears in the Koran is exactly what Ali needed to present to save humanity from the wrath of Allah.\textsuperscript{475}

For instance, Chapter Four of Ali’s work does not continue with the same story line as the first couple of chapters. Instead it jumps to Dowling’s Chapter Fifteen. In this literary leap, Ali goes straight to the death of Elizabeth and the lessons on death given at her funeral.\textsuperscript{476} Matheno, a hermit priest, gave this lesson before taking twelve-year-old John the Harbinger back to his home land of Egypt to continue his education. This lesson, given to John, was a lot less of a eulogy than it was a discussion of the nature of death for humanity. He states, “Death is not an enemy of man; it is a friend who, when the work of life is done, just cuts the cord that binds the human boat to earth, that it may sail on smoother seas.”\textsuperscript{477} What may be important in this chapter is the focus on Egypt as a place of high adept learning. Being that Egypt is where Ali also received his education, highlighting that point for his Holy Koran seems fitting.

More to this point, Chapters Nine and Ten of Ali’s writing focus on the education Jesus received from the Brahmins.\textsuperscript{478} The next two chapters,\textsuperscript{479} however, focus on Jesus’ education from the Buddhist priests. Ali was concerned about the education Jesus

\textsuperscript{475} Ibid., 50-54. From Chapter four to Chapter five for Ali skips a few more chapters of Dowling’s transcription. In the Gospel chapters fifteen through twenty include discussions of the early childhood and education of Jesus, his interaction with the Jewish Rabbis and his disputes concerning Jewish law. Again, it is not clear why these chapters are not included because they focus on the early life of Jesus. It is understandable that John’s early life was not included because he is not the main focus of the Moors, but as Ali’s Koran is written for “all those who love Jesus,” it would follow that his early life would have been included.

\textsuperscript{476} Ibid., 48-49. Ibid., 8-9.
\textsuperscript{477} Ibid., 48. Ibid., 8.
\textsuperscript{478} Ibid., 63-65. Ibid., 13-16.
\textsuperscript{479} These chapters correspond with chapter thirty-two and thirty-three of Dowling’s text. Ibid., 69-72. Ibid., 16-18.
received from the Buddhist and Hindu priests, but he seemed to find no use for Chapter Thirty (of Dowling) dealing with Jesus receiving news about the death of his father. Again, this may be an effort to emphasize the diverse nature of Moorish Islam and its variety of sources. Recall for a minute the diagram of Islamism designed by Pleasant-Bey presented earlier in this chapter. The attention Ali gives in his Koran to Egypt, India and other areas of the east only bolsters the point that Moorish Islam incorporates all those spiritual traditions. It can be argued Ali chose these particular chapters for his Koran to ensure the Moors knew the ancient and diverse nature of their belief system.

Despite this point, it is still a wonder why Ali did not give any attention to Jesus receiving news about the death of his father. At first glance, the significance might be missed, but discussion of Jesus’ earthly father solidifies his humanity. In most Christian traditions, Jesus’ father is God. In Dowling’s report from Visel, this is not the case. 480 Perhaps Ali did not want to include this to maintain the mystery of Jesus’ life, which adds to the mystery of his own life. Or maybe he knew discussion of Jesus being human (and only human) might ‘fly in the face’ of the beliefs of many Black Christians, thereby turning them off to Moorish Islam.

To continue, Chapter Thirteen of Ali’s Koran makes a large corresponding jump from the order of Dowling’s text, in that, this chapter is the same as Chapter Forty-seven

480 Elihu Pleasant-Bey, Exhuming a Nation. Biography of Nobel Drew Ali: Appendix; Noble Drew Ali, Mysteries of The Christ, Jehoshua His Life, Works and Teachings in India and Egypt (Memphis: Seven Seal Publication, 2004), 71-96. Chapter thirty appears on page 95. While chapter thirty does not appear in Ali’s Holy Koran it does make an appearance in the section of Pleasant-Bey’s collection of Ali’s writings entitled “Mysteries of The Christ, Jehoshua His Life, Works and Teachings in India and Egypt.” This writing is separate from the Holy Koran, in this document a few of the chapters that appear in the Koran but it is mainly made up of a few of the chapter that were skipped by Ali. Not all the chapters as there was a lot of Dowling’s transcription that did not make it in to the Koran.
for Dowling, which is in the eleventh section. This maneuver omits five sections and thirteen chapters skipping Jesus’ life in Tibet, Persia, Assyria, and Greece. However, Chapter Forty-seven continues with Jesus’ return to Egypt with his teachers Elihu and Salome. In this chapter, Jesus meets with his teachers in order to demonstrate his readiness in being tested for his acceptance or approval by the ‘secret brotherhood’. The tests require him to pass through seven degrees of understanding, the result of which reveal the Christ as the avatar of the divine on earth.

There is, however, one significant omission with this chapter - Ali dealing with John’s message to the Jewish Pharisees and Priests. What is omitted from Ali’s version are the last two verses of the chapter which state, “The common people stood in his defence; they said, The hermit speaks the truth. And then the priests, the doctors and the scribes were so afraid; they said no more; they hid themselves away.” Ali’s version does not include the people who came to the defense of the Harbinger. It would seem this would be an important part of the story that would serve other oppressed masses

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485 Ibid., 104.
well. That is to say, a story of a common oppressed people (as it the case for Africans in America) standing up to their elite oppressors could inspire experiential commonality.

Chapter Fifteen goes directly into Jesus’ wilderness experience, which laid the path for his ministry.\(^{486}\) The chapters that were omitted detail the Harbinger’s travels to Jerusalem, Jericho, Gilgal, Bethany, Jordan and Galilee, where he came to baptize Jesus.\(^{487}\) The omission of certain chapters leaves one to wonder about the inspiration. For example, in Dowling’s Chapter Sixty-four John the Harbinger becomes John the Baptist as he performs the most critical rite, which proceeds Jesus’ ministry, baptism.\(^{488}\) This would seem to be an important occurrence that is critical to the overall lesson of Jesus’ life and teachings. It can be argued, however, that this chapter did not make it into the Koran because baptism itself is not an important rite for the Moors. Furthermore, this is not a rite that exists in any African American Islamic movement on record. While African American Islam is famous for its use of Christian scripture and motif, baptism is one symbolic rite that remained particularly Christian in this instance.

From Chapter Fifteen to Sixteen of the Koran there is a huge omission of over one hundred chapters, covering most of Jesus’ ministry.\(^{489}\) This is definitely the most notable and yet curious omission because Ali’s Koran was compiled for the expressed purpose of providing information concerning Jesus’ life beyond what is in the King


\(^{488}\) Ibid., 106-107.

James' version of the Bible. The accepted King James Version (KJV) of the Bible does not deal with any of Jesus' travels outside of the immediate area in which he was born, whereas Ali narrates Jesus' travels to "India, Europe and Africa," and the 18 years of his life that do not appear in the KJV. So, why skip the entirety of his ministry, the stories of his miracles and the responses from witnesses? Theoretically, the motif and modality would fit into the schema of the Koran, but in actuality, given the relatively small amount of information available in Ali's work compared to Dowling's, Ali did not

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490 Ibid., 3.
492 Ibid., 36 A royal prince of India. Ravanna in the South, was at the Jewish Feast. Ravanna was a man of wealth, and he was just, and with a band of Brahmic priests sought wisdom in the west. When Jesus stood among the Jewish priests and read and spoke, Ravanna heard and was amazed. And when he asked who Jesus was, from whence He came and what He was, Chief Hillel said: "We call this child the Day Star from on high, for He has come to bring to men a light, the light of life; to lighten up the way of men and to redeem His people of Israel." And Hillel told Ravanna all about the child; about the prophecies concerning Him; about the wonders of the night when He was born; about the visit of the Magian priests. About the way in which He was protected from the wrath of evil men; about His flight to Egypt land, and how He then was serving with His father as a carpenter in Nazareth. Ravanna was entranced, and asked to know the way to Nazareth, that he might go and honor such a one as son of Allah. And with his gorgeous train he journeyed and came to Nazareth of Galilee. He found the object of his search engaged in building dwellings for the sons of men. And when he first saw Jesus He was climbing up a twelve-step ladder, and He carried in His hands a compass, square and axe. Ravanna said: "All hail, most favored son of Heaven!" And at the inn Ravanna made a feast for all the people of the town; and Jesus and His parents were honored guests. For certain days Ravanna was a guest in Joseph's home on Marmion Way; he sought to learn the secret of the wisdom of the son; but it was all to great for him. And then he asked that he might be the patron of the child, might take Him to the east, where He could learn the wisdom of the Brahms. And Jesus longed to go, that He might learn; and after many days His parents gave consent. Then, with proud heart, Ravanna with his train, began the journey towards the rising sun; and after many days they crossed the sand, and reached the province of Orissa, and the palace of the prince. The Brahmic priests were glad to welcome home the prince; with favor they received the Jewish boy. And Jesus was accepted as a pupil in the Temple Jagannath; and here He learned the Vedas and the Manic law. The Brahmic Masters wondered at the clear conceptions of the Child, and often were amazed when He explained to them the meaning of the law.
use that much of Dowling’s transcription. To put it simply, with the available one hundred and eighty-two chapters of Dowling’s work, only nineteen of those chapters appear in the *Holy Koran*.

To elaborate further, the sixteenth chapter of the *Holy Koran* jumps straight from Jesus' pre-ministry baptism to his trial. This makes it clear Ali had little interest in Jesus’ ministry but only in what the icon represented symbolically. To explain, the remaining chapters of the *Koran* from Dowling’s text deal with Jesus’ appearance post resurrection. Moreover, many of these appearances are made in the company of the ‘silent brotherhood.’ The last five chapters of the *Koran* (before the section of the *Koran* where the “Holy Instructions” are outlined (chapters fourteen through nineteen, Ali; chapters sixty-one, sixty-five, one hundred sixty-eight, one hundred seventy-eight, one hundred seventy-two and one hundred seventy-six, Dowling)) only focus on the symbolically esoteric events: baptism, death and resurrection.

Therefore, I submit Noble Drew Ali organized this *Holy Koran* specifically to present particular passages that would provide the Moors with the type of substance he thought most useful for African American people culturally. He had no interest in Jesus’ ministry, because he had his own ministry for his people. Thus, Jesus’ ministry was

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493 Ibid., 71-96. Twenty-three are in the *Mysteries of Jesus Christ*, which is a separate prepared writing of Ali’s.
496 Ibid., 20-28.
497 Ibid., 29-53. Again, the research on the Moors suggests this section comes from the text, *Unto Thee I Grant*, see chapter 3 of this dissertation. Susan B. Nance,
never important for Ali, only the symbol that the Christ represents, a symbol of ancient knowledge and wisdom, as well as a symbol of humanity’s potential for divinity.

**The Christ and The Moors**

Christian symbols and philosophy that appear in the theology of the MSTA only fit into the Moorish understanding of Islamism. So, the Moors are not Christian at all but Islamic in the ancient sense. Therefore, this discussion of Christianity as it relates to the MSTA is in context of the certain symbols or concepts. The Moors would argue Christianity is a spin-off of ancient Moorish Islam, which forms the foundation for their belief system. However, as it has been shown, they make deliberate use of Christian icons and symbolism, in particular the Christ figure. Moreover, this Christ figure does not come out of traditional understanding of the New Testament’s Jesus Christ, who is the central focus of the KJV Bible. Ali’s Christ instead is a prophet who taught throughout the Asiatic world as a sage of the Aquarian Age.

Ali’s interpretation of Christ has not been studied with the measure of seriousness that it deserves. Nance remarks, “since Ali’s emergence in Chicago in the mid-1920s, both academics and journalists have defined the Moorish Science Temple alternatively as a form of heretical Christianity, or simply as the bizarre invention of disoriented Southern blacks lost in the urban North.”\(^{498}\) For Ali, Christ as a central icon is a figure whose ultimate purpose is to validate his own divinity as one who is in the same spiritual progeny of prophets sent to earth to “save a fallen humanity.” This makes Ali the Christ figure for the MSTA, like Jesus of Nazareth, who was chosen to teach and “save” his


\(^{498}\) Ibid., 100.
people from the wrath of the Allah. This is to say, Ali found use of the Christ figure of Dowling’s *Gospel* as an analogy of his own spiritual divinity and sacred purpose for bringing a message of redemption.\(^{499}\) Nance speaks to this, “Noble Drew Ali drew from the American tradition of the mystical Jesus to authenticate his prophet hood with a spiritual-travel story akin to the mystical travel stories of Notovitch and Lewis.”\(^{500}\)

Given the uniqueness with which the MSTA has expressed its relation to the Christ figure, I am arguing that it (in effect) has created its own Moorish Christology. Christology is the study of how the Christ figure is interpreted, analyzed and understood by diverging communities. Particularly, for marginalized groups, Christology can offer different and unique expressions of what Christ represents. It can be argued, the Moors are not entirely unique in this regard. Ali developed a vision or interpretation of Christ for the MSTA in order to reach the growing transient population of Africans in the United States during the early part of the twentieth century.

Furthermore, I argue this method of iconic manipulation is congruent with the efforts of other African Americans who used Christianity to feed a sense of resistance to the oppression they were experiencing. Consequently, the development of Moorish Christology is a direct result of the modality of the experiences of African Americans. So, the development of a Moorish Christology is a form of resistance for Ali and the

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\(^{499}\) To be clear, the theology of the MSTA does resemble the belief of redemptive suffering. That is to say, that for the Moors, some of the reason why African people in American (Moors) are enslaved and oppressed is because they have moved away from Allah’s laws. And that, through this experience, the nation of Moors will realize their folly, obey Allah’s mandates and find redemption. This is in effect, redemptive suffering.

Moors. To put it another way, resistance for Ali also came in the form of a philosophy of self-identity (or knowledge of self) that did not accept the traditional interpretation of the Christ. Perhaps for him, the traditional interpretation of Christ was one of the reasons Africans in America were devoid of knowledge of self. They were only told part of the story while the most critical elements of Jesus’ ministry were withheld. As it has been shown, Ali’s offering of the Christ story goes above and beyond the efforts of King James, but it is not as expansive as Dowling’s narrative.

Simply put, the Holy Koran of MSTA as prepared by Noble Drew Ali is an effort to capture the essence of the Christ figure in a way that goes against traditional interpretations of the icon for the purpose of addressing the crisis of identity or consciousness prevalent among African Americans in the early twentieth century. While it does seem Ali simply copied-and-pasted part of Dowling’s narrative, what became clear is that they are two very different prepared writings that have different purposes. Ali’s Holy Koran is unique and should not be discussed in the shadow of Dowling’s efforts but reviewed under its own merit as an effort to address the cultural hegemony of the western world. Nance speaks to this point, referring to Dowling, she states, “though Ali’s plagiarism is clear, he did contribute something new to this tradition of the mystical Jesus through his own retelling and interpretation of the story.”

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501 Susan B. Nance, “Moslem’s That Old Time Religion”: Moorish Science and The Meaning of Islam in the 1920s Black Chicago. (Toronto: Simon Fraser University, 1996), 125. The author continues: “Without ignoring Ali’s plagiarism, I would have to agree that both Ali’s and Dowling’s use of the mystical Jesus formed parallel strains of a continuum of popular American mysticism. However rather than posit some simultaneous transmission from the Universal mind to both Ali an Dowling we should investigate Ali’s plagarism since it make the source of Ali’s ideas explicitly clear.”
Synopsis

Moorish Islamism is a unique combination of borrowed or co-opted spiritual traditions that was prepared by Ali for people of African descent in America. Again, it is most likely Ali simply took the most prominent religious tools in his reach and organized them in a way that was relevant for African Americans. These tools are the image of Islam in the West; certain Islamic words, terms and concepts that best reflect the Islamic religion. He made these tools relevant by convincing his followers that the tools were always theirs. Islam is a part of ancient Moorish heritage and this is the belief system that was taught to Jesus by the adepts of the East.

Summarily, Ali’s *Holy Koran* is a “Genealogy of Jesus,” for “all those that love Jesus,” particularly for Moorish Americans who “are returning to Islam, which was founded by our forefathers for our early and divine salvation.” Ali did not come to condemn the white Christians but to understand the true nature of Jesus’ life and message for the earth, to teach Moorish Americans and humanity to “love instead of hate.” However, it often seems that the entire point of Ali’s ministry was to bolster his own image as well as the image of African Americans. This is a problem because much of what Ali presents is very loose and seems to be just a way to demonstrate African American cultural superiority over European Americans. In effect, this type of propaganda is no different from that of European hegemony and reads as simply ‘Black people’ trying to do to White people what was done to them.’ This seems to be the

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503 Ibid., 53.
504 Ibid., 53.
reason why Ali chose the symbols that he did; he simply wanted to organize a movement antithetical to European culture.

Moorish Islam, as it is presented in Ali’s Holy Koran and the symbols the Moors employ, is a rethinking of the “us vs. them” dialectical conflict that has dominated interaction between the East and West for centuries. That is to say, it is not a particularly advanced approach toward oppression in the world, just a way to try and reverse the tide. While Ali may have meant well through the organization of the Moorish movement, in the final analysis, his efforts seem to be a bit superficial. There is no way to verify Ali’s ancient claims. Instead, it is obvious from his focus on Islam and his leanings toward a mystical Jesus, that Ali was a man of his time, very knowledgeable of the popular, political, and social culture of the 1920s.
Chapter 4

Moorish Masonry

"I Have Come To Take The Cover Off All The Secret Societies."505

The above quotation speaks to Noble Drew Ali’s aims regarding his exposure of Freemasons. More specifically, Ali’s focus on the origins of Moorish Americans was an effort to uncover the lies of Europeans, who claimed African people had no history and were not considered human. For the Moors, Freemasonry fostered this narrative and strengthened it through the development of [their] secret society. Moreover, within the Freemasonic organizational structure lay the secrets of Moorish origins.

This chapter will analyze the elements of Freemasonry that are within Moorish structure and philosophy such as symbols, phrases, legends and gestures. However, this discussion must be put into context because of the complex relationship the Moors and Freemasons share. On the one hand, Freemasonry is a part of Moorish culture in that its signs and symbols have been integrated into the overall structure of the Moorish organization. On the other hand, the Moors claim the Freemasons stole its ancient signs and symbols. Because of this and the complicity of Freemasons in the enslavement of African people, Freemasonry (for the MSTA) is recognized as a major inhibitor to African freedom in the world.506 Therefore, the Moors seek to reclaim what the Freemasons took and expose their evil. Given these issues this chapter (1) will discuss

505 Ibid., 74.
506 Ibid., 73. Today, Freemasonry stands as the major blockage of Negroes, Blacks and Colored People ordained attainment of nationhood, under their one free national name and rejoining the Nations of the Human Family. In respect to historical events, it was the work of this Secret Society, which, committed the murder, buried the victim and concealed the evidence. Therefore it is not disrespectful to go through the Masonic system, to retrieve that which is hidden therein. It is an unavoidable necessity!
the relationship between the Moors and Freemasons as an issue of reclamation for the Moors; (2) it will also analyze the philosophy that lies behind the particular symbols and symbolic language that the Freemasons and Moors share.

There is very little information to suggest Ali was ever part of a Masonic Order or secret Fraternal Order. Nevertheless, elements of Freemasonry perform a vital function within the MSTA's overall organizational structure and teachings.\textsuperscript{507} Nance argues, “Ali’s use of Masonry in the articulation of his ideas is evident in a series of symbols and names he used which seem to show residue from Ali’s own career as a Shriner and Mason.”\textsuperscript{508} We can only assume Ali (at least) had contact with members and/or source materials from one or both of the organizations, but we cannot conclude that he was a member. Therefore, this chapter has no interest in attempting to verify Ali’s membership in an esoteric organization instead it is interested in understanding the elements of esotericism that he employed in the structure of his movement.

Reclamation

For the MSTA, much of the effort in developing their organization has been a push towards reclamation of their name, history, symbols and science. Again, they claim to be the oldest people (cultural tradition) on the planet. Therefore, all the signs and symbols that appear in their organizational structure are ancient symbols other organizations, movements, belief systems and/or religions also have co-opted over the years. This is most true in the context of Freemasonry.


\textsuperscript{508} Ibid., 130.
This issue of reclamation revolves around one of the most important stories for Freemasonry, the story of Hiram Abiff, chief architect of the Temple of Solomon. The story of Hiram Abiff is an allegory of the rituals and ceremonies of the Freemason craft.\(^{509}\) It is about the trials Hiram Abiff had to go through as the Master builder of Solomon’s Temple. These were essentially trials of honor and loyalty, as he had to keep the secret of Solomon’s Temple: \(^{510}\) “Three Fellow Craftsmen, not yet Master Masons, determined to wait for [Abiff] as he came out and to force him to give them the secret word of recognition of the Master Mason. Their names were Jubela, Jubelo and Jubelum.”\(^{511}\) Facing his three assailants, Abiff performs certain actions that are mimicked by Craftsmen during Freemasonic rituals. Knowledge of the rituals and their proper execution are meant to tell an allegorical tale of the trials of humanity.\(^{512}\)

Like the Moors, information on the Freemasons is usually a mix of history and gross embellishment, with stories of worldwide conspiracy for global domination.\(^{513}\) But the most widely accepted version of Masonic history (or at least the version they tell) is


\(^{510}\) Ibid., 124.

\(^{511}\) Ibid., 124.

\(^{512}\) Ibid., 124.

that their origins are told in the Old Testament of the Bible and that they are the builders of the great Egyptian and Judaic temples.\textsuperscript{514} The Freemason legends claim:

Moses was initiated into the secrets and mysteries of the priestly order when in Egypt, and some have imagined that the Hebrews assisted in the construction of the pyramids; but, in all probability, these wondrous efforts of Masonic skill were hoary with age when the children of Israel settled in the land of Goshen, and were emblems of sublime truths to a civilized nation when Abraham was a wanderer in the wilderness.\textsuperscript{515}

This passage tells of the long and ancient history of the Freemasons. However, this source of history is more commonly understood as mythology and would be better interpreted symbolically instead of literally.\textsuperscript{516} So, like the Moors, there is an issue of who is telling the story, why are they telling the story, and how can it be interpreted.

For the Freemasons, what is critical to the secret of their craft is how something is read or interpreted. The same goes for the Moors; they read their history and origins a certain way. To this point, Pleasant-Bey argues, the story of Hiram Abiff is a symbolic dramatization of the fall of African people. Hiram Abiff, a Master builder of King David, King Solomon and the Son of Venus, is a murder victim in this story, whose crime is never solved because of the secrecy of the conspirators.\textsuperscript{517} The Moors argue the middle


\textsuperscript{516} D. Knoop and G. P. Jones, The Genesis of Freemasonry: An Account of the Rise and Development of Freemasonry in its Operative, Accepted and Early Speculative Stages (Manchester: Q.C. Correspondence, Ltd, 1978). The authors argue that modern Freemasonry took with the English and Scottish Rites at the end of the seventeenth century.

\textsuperscript{517} Elihu Pleasant-Bey, The Biography of Noble Drew Ali: The Exhuming of a Nation (Memphis: Seven Seals Publications, 2004), 74. "The foundation of European Freemasonry rests upon a murder. The murder is a pogrom of the God-Man Of The Nile,
passage represents an attempt of European Freemasons to destroy the cultural memory of African people. For the Moors, Freemasonry is part of the conspiracy to "murder" Moorish ancient history to keep people of African descent from understanding their divine nature, which will negatively affect the entirety of humanity.\(^{518}\)

However, Freemasonry has served an important historical role for the Moors in the United States. Pleasant-Bey explains:

As for the entity of Freemasonry and the role it play in the resurrection of its so-called Negro People; if a person needs to get from Wednesday to Friday, he or she must go through Thursday. It is not disrespectful to go through Thursday (from its day through to its night) to reach Friday: it is necessary! In the course of human events, it is just a natural fact someone put Friday behind Thursday. Likewise, when one wants to get to the "Tomb of the Unknown Nation," buried underneath the constitution of The Unites States, when the unconscious African Rulers lay in state... he or she must go through the secret-seal of Freemasonry.\(^{519}\)

According to Pleasant-Bey, Freemasonry was a necessary evil that led African people in America to find their way back to the truth of Moorish Islamism. To elaborate, the African Kings and Indigenous African Nationals. This capital crime included the subjugation of Africa through the dosing of "The Light" in Egypt and the obscenity of the true Garden of Eden. This homicide is disguised in the constitution of Freemasonry as "The Killing of Hiram Abiff, The Widow's Son". The embodiment of this slaying is unquestionably 'The Master Crime of The Times'! Hiram's death depicts a history, from the first physical (African) man to be enlightened with wisdom to the last mankind (European) to become civilized with knowledge... and back again... Since this murder has not been publicly reported, the true characters will be revealed because there is no innocence to protect. Not only has this murder gone unreported but also because of the Great Conspiracy, those who have been most victimized now carry the 'black' mark of death, yet does not realize he is dead. Yet, both the murder and the death are real.\(^{518}\) Ibid., 78. This is a particular read not only of Freemasonry but religion in general. Pleasant-Bey states, "1460 to 1492 through 1555 to 1619, the enslavement of the Moors was a religious issue. It was supported by the Jews with their Torah, enforced by the Muslims with the Quran and all entities under the Cross (from the Roman Catholic Pope's Vatican to the Christian churches of Europe)." Again, this is an ancient charge of the Moors towards Freemasonry and religion, that all that they represent comes from the ancient Moorish tradition.\(^{519}\) Ibid., 73.
Moors believe the enslavement of African people was a necessary event orchestrated by Allah to remind them of their true and divine nature. Enslavement seems to represent the “primordial disaster” Freemasons must endure when they are being initiated into the craft. In this event, initiates are taken through a difficult experience in order to discover the light within themselves. Nance elaborates, “the primordial disaster’ of African Americans’ enslavement and post-emancipation suffering in urban America may have been interpreted by some black Masons as a reflection of the symbolic catastrophe preceding Masonic rebirth.”\footnote{Susan B. Nance, “Moslem’s That Old Time Religion”: Moorish Science and The Meaning of Islam in the 1920s Black Chicago. (Toronto: Simon Fraser University, 1996), 132.} Under the mandate of Allah, the Moors have been through their primordial disaster (the middle passage) and now it is time to reclaim what was stolen. The craft of Freemasonry is one of those things that must be reclaimed.

Also, Freemasons of European descent have used the esoteric tools of the ancient Moorish traditions to build their own societies and nations carrying on the legacy of the Moors. These tools are the utensils of self-knowledge that help humans understand the conflicting parts of the self: the higher and lower selves. Reclamation of these tools can only happen when African people realize their true and divine nature. Otherwise, people of African descent will be forever enslaved (mentally speaking) to those who understand ancient esoteric knowledge.\footnote{Elihu Pleasant-Bey, The Biography of Noble Drew Ali: The Exhuming of a Nation (Memphis: Seven Seals Publications, 2004), 74.}

This type of ideology sounds suspiciously like a move towards the notion of redemptive suffering. That is, suffering at the hands of Europeans was mandated by Allah in order to eventually redeem his people and make them spiritually complete. The
Moors are comfortable with this notion because without the need to be saved there would be no need for a savior in the person of Noble Drew Ali. For them, Ali is only showing them the way back into the merciful bosom of Allah, while those who do not accept this saving grace will have to face Allah’s wrath. Moreover, if they accept their Nationality as Moorish and live according to the way Ali mandated in his *Holy Koran*, the Moors will be saved.

The saving grace of Allah is paramount for the Moors, so every problem or impediment to African freedom is simply an effort by Allah to reach his people. The only thing African people can do to save themselves is to realize their “status” as Sovereigns of the Moorish nation and practice the five tenets of Islamism. For the Moors, Abiff’s story only tells of what was done to African people in allegorical form. The allegory of this story is also represented by the builder’s tools, language and posture, which gives form and function to the building of the ‘temple of man.’

**The Tools of Freedom**

The meaning of certain Moorish symbols and the symbols of Freemasonry are very similar but the Moors argue their version of the symbols predate any from those of Freemasonry. Further, the Moors believe Freemasons have stolen the symbols it uses from the Moorish tradition. For instance, Ali claims the symbolism concerning the

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builder's tools came from one of Jesus' lessons from a Temple in Nazareth.  

Symbolically, these builder's tools are not just meant to build pyramids and temples, but to be used "in the workshop of the mind where things are made of thoughts and where humans build up character."  

For the Moors, the builder's tools (the tools of Hiram Abiff) are symbolic and loaded with meaning. Pleasant-Bey argues there are many types of tools, some used to

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524 Elihu Pleasant-Bey, *Exhuming a Nation: Biography of Noble Drew Ali: Appendix;* Noble Drew Ali, *The Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple of America* (Memphis: Seven Seal Publication, 2004), 1-57. We use the square to measure all our lines, to straighten out the crooked places of the way, and make the corners of our conduct square. We used the compass to draw the circles around our passions and desires to keep them in the bounds of righteousness. We use the ax to cut away the knotty, useless and ungainly parts and make the character symmetrical. We use the hammer to drive home the truth, and pound it in until it is a part of every part. We use the plane to smooth the rough, uneven surface of joint and block and board that go to build the temple for the truth. The chisel, line, the plummet and the saw have all their uses in the workshop of the mind. And then this ladder with its trinity of steps, faith, hope, and love; on it we climb up the dome of purity in life. And on the twelve step ladder, we ascend until we reach the pinnacle of that which life is spent to build the Temple of Perfected Man.


build and some used to destroy. People of African descent in America have used tools that have only caused death and destruction, i.e., guns, drugs, secret oaths, etcetera.  

However, Chapter Five of the Holy Koran (or chapter twenty for Dowling) is focused on the tools of love, truth, peace, freedom and justice. The story goes this way: as Jesus’ parents Joseph and Mary were looking for him, they found Jesus at a temple receiving lessons on the symbolic importance of carpentry as an esoteric tradition. The lesson begins as follows: “We use the square to measure all our lines, to straighten out the crooked places of the way, and make the corners of our conduct square.” Symbolically, the square is a tool to measure virtue and “is used to certify the Character at a right angle.” The square measures a person’s conduct to determine if a person is living correctly or “right” as in a ninety-degree right angle.

In Freemasonry, the square also symbolizes the tool of virtue, a tool to “righ?” our conduct. Moreover, in the lodge, if Freemasons are paid up on their respective dues they are said to be “on the square” or “square” with the lodge. The square is so ubiquitous in the craft that much of the language surrounding it appears in the colloquial

529 Ibid., 10.
532 Ibid., 416.
lexicon of the average American. For instance, terms like: “square deal” or to get something “squared away” come directly from the Freemasons. 533 Similarly, for the Moors, they will also use phrases and lingo that provide clues as to how they understand and interpret these ancient tools. For instance, Sheikh Emanuel of the Albany, New York Temple, when referring to Ali states: “I know one who stood on the square and came and gave me what I have today.” 534 Here the Sheikh is saying Noble Drew Ali (Figure 14) literally and figuratively stood on the square to give Moors knowledge of their divine nature.

Figure 14: Noble Drew Ali standing on the square. 536

To elaborate, in the photo above Ali is standing on the square (notice the positioning of his feet), which symbolizes his level of knowledge. 536 Standing on the

533 Ibid., 709.
square, in the physical sense, means standing straight while angling one’s feet forty-five degrees outward to make a ninety degree angle at the base of their heels. This is to be done by all Moorish Adepts as they pray or address a temple congregation. In Sheikh Emanuel’s video lecture, he does this very thing before beginning his sermon.537 Physically standing on the square is only a symbolic representation of the spiritual stance the Moorish Adepts have taken: to stand for RIGHTeousness. Nance argues, the posture of Moors “is also a Masonic and Shriner oath pose symbolizing honesty and loyalty. Perhaps by posing this way Ali was attempting to demonstrate to his followers his association with fraternalism as a demonstration of his respectability and the truth of his principles.”538

Second, Jesus learns about the compass: “we use the compass to draw the circles around our passions and desires to keep them in the bounds of righteousness.”539 The purpose of the compass is to draw a line (or create separation) between one’s desires and the external distractions that can take a person off the path of the righteousness or take

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536 Susan B. Nance, “Moslem’s That Old Time Religion”: Moorish Science and The Meaning of Islam in the 1920s Black Chicago. (Toronto: Simon Fraser University, 1996), 84. The author remarks on Ali’s Masonic attire when referring to a picture taken by the Chicago Defender: “In the center stands Noble Drew Ali posing in his favored Masonic-oath style pose, right hand resting against his chest.”


them “off their square.” The line drawn with the compass is the line between the higher and lower self, or the good and evil that resides in all humans. So, the point for the Moors is to understand one’s desires but also be able to draw a line between what they need as righteous individuals and what their lower selves may want to feed their desire. Moreover, the combination of the compass and square are co-dependent symbols that are often (if not always) used in tandem. The compass and square (as a combination of symbols) represent the duality of humanity.

To add to this, there are two stars that are important to the MSTA symbolically, the five-pointed star and the six-pointed star. The five-pointed star (discussed in Chapter Two, Figure 2) is the star that appears on the Moorish American flag and represents the five tenets of Islamism, while the six-pointed star represents the duality of existence. Also, the six-pointed star is one of the five acronymistic degrees of the ancient mystery system of the Moors (discussed in Chapter Three, Figures 8-12). It is the fourth degree

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540 Elihu Pleasant-Bey, *Exhuming a Nation: Biography of Nobel Drew Ali* (Memphis: Seven Seal Publication, 2004), 415. “We use the ax to cut away the knotty, useless and ungainly parts and make the character symmetrical.” The ax did not receive much attention from Pleasant-Bey.
541 Ibid., 416.
544 Ibid., 495.
and it represents the Jewish religion,\textsuperscript{546} which, according to the Moors, is one of the religions that came out of the ancient mystery system.

To elaborate further, Pleasant-Bey argues, "the 6-pointed star, being from the weaker (even and dividable) side of the numeric scale, was not originated as a Jewish symbol. The origin of this symbol rests deep into the lodges of The Ancient Egyptian Mystery System and represented the horizon (or awareness) of Man's Infinite in his higher self and the totality of his Human Knowledge deriving from finite experience."\textsuperscript{547}

By finite experiences, he is referring to the experiences of our lower selves, the body. The infinite self is the part of the human that is not bound by the limits of space and time, the spirit.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure15.png}
\caption{Compass and Square superimposed over the Star of David.\textsuperscript{548}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{546} Albert Gallatin Mackey, Edward L. Hawkins, and William James Hughan. \textit{An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and Its Kindred Sciences, Comprising the Whole Range of Arts, Sciences and Literature As Connected with the Institution}, (New York: Masonic History Co., 1912), 801.

\textsuperscript{547} Elihu Pleasant-Bey, \textit{Exhuming a Nation: Biography of Nobel Drew Ali} (Memphis: Seven Seal Publication, 2004), 495.

Further, the six-pointed star is indicative of the duality of existence for humanity, in that, each point of the star represents both: truth/falsehood, life/death, man/woman, light/darkness, high/low, and good/evil.\textsuperscript{549} This is the duality of life all humans must face and reconcile.\textsuperscript{550} The Adept\textquotesingle{s} of the Moors refer to this duality as "The Duality of Totals of this World."\textsuperscript{551} Subsequently, according to the Moors, this duality can be witnessed in many symbols from across the world.\textsuperscript{552} Ali also addresses these dualities in the third chapter of the \textit{Holy Koran} (Chapter Eight of Dowling).\textsuperscript{553} In this chapter, a sage named Elihu was giving lessons to the mothers\textquotesingle; of Jesus and John, Mary and Elizabeth respectively, that dealt with the two selves of ‘man’ (humanity), the higher and lower self, seats of the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ elements of the human spirit. Elihu states, "There are two selves; the higher and lower self. The higher self is human spirit clothed with soul made in the form of Allah. The lower self, the carnal self, the body of desires, is a reflection of the higher distorted by the murky ethers of the flesh."\textsuperscript{554} The lesson continues, as Elihu teaches the mothers that God (the divine) and the Devil (evil) are


\textsuperscript{550} Albert Gallatin Mackey, Edward L. Hawkins, and William James Hughan. \textit{An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and Its Kindred Sciences, Comprising the Whole Range of Arts, Sciences and Literature As Connected with the Institution}, (New York: Masonic History Co, 1912), 687.

\textsuperscript{551} Ibid., 495.

\textsuperscript{552} Ibid., 495. Such as the Yin and Yang symbol.


\textsuperscript{554} Ibid., 40. Ibid., 7.
simply manifestations of the higher and lower selves respectively, making one complete but always conflicting human being.

To this point, Nance argues, Ali "saw the 'higher self' or soul as the divine essence within each man. The lesson of Islam was knowledge of both the higher and lower selves."555 Further, according to the Moors, these dualities are the primary form and function of this planet, and help humans better understand themselves.556 Simply, "they serve as reminders of man's rights and wrongs, do's and don'ts, sow and reap, good and evil, etc."557 This, for the Moors, is the purpose of most religions - the harmony and balance of these opposites.558 For instance, the story of Adam and Eve is a clear example for Moors of Christianity's effort to allegorize the push and pull of dualities.559 "Without the true knowledge of Adam and Eve, carnal Man will believe He lives in the make-believe life that is trapped between birth and death."560

This is the essence of the combined compass and square for the Moors and Freemasons: it is synonymous with the symbolic essence of the "Star of David." The Moors are focused on the connecting and balancing of what (for them) has been torn apart and manipulated. By addressing the issue of the harmony of opposites, Ali focuses on humanity's self understanding in the world. Meaning, if humans understand

557 Ibid., 340.
558 Ibid., 340.
559 Ibid., 292.
560 Ibid., 292.
themselves, they would know they are simply “the truth and falsehood strangely mixed,”
and acceptance of that fact will put them on the road back towards Allah.\textsuperscript{561}

To this point, as the compass/square and the “Star of David” are symbolic of the
higher and lower selves, it must be noted that this concept received sustained attention in
the text \textit{Unto Thee I Grant}, which is where Ali purportedly got his “Holy Instructions.”
Being that the Rosicrucians are a mystic organization much like (if not exactly like) the
Freemasons, the conflicting but complementary “selves” of the human are a primary
concern. Nance elaborates, arguing, the Rosicrucian text “contained ideas akin to Ali’s
conception of the struggle between the carnal and higher selves. For Ali, this internal
battle mirrored the struggle between white stereotypes of the lazy, immoral Negro and
respectable black behavior.”\textsuperscript{562} Ali’s attention to these concepts speaks to (at least) a
familiarity with esoteric sciences, a familiarity that may one day lead to proof of his
membership in such an organization. Presently however, this merely demonstrates that
Ali was aware of the existence of such knowledge and thereby was able to take advantage
of it for the sake of the Moorish nation.

More on this point, in the \textit{Koranic Questionnaire}, questions sixty-six through
eighty-four are focused primarily on these two warring selves of the human.\textsuperscript{563} The
higher and lower selves for the Moors are simply the “angels who protect the Holy City
of Mecca”, “those who were cast out of the Holy City, and those that accept their

\textsuperscript{561} Ibid., 495.
\textsuperscript{562} Susan B. Nance, \textit{“Moslem’s That Old Time Religion”}: Moorish Science and
The Meaning of Islam in the 1920s Black Chicago. (Toronto: Simon Fraser University,
1996), 128.
\textsuperscript{563} Elihu Pleasant-Bey, \textit{Exhuming a Nation: Biography of Noble Drew Ali:
Appendix}; Noble Drew Ali, \textit{The Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple of America}
teaching.⁵⁶⁴ Therefore, the higher and lower selves are two sides of the same human coin, a relationship structured by the path each person chooses to follow. To live by the virtue of harmony means tapping into the energy of the higher self. Selfishness and hatred is what fuels the lower self. They are energies that only seek to devour and destroy.⁵⁶⁵ It seems clear through these questions that the Devil and Allah are human manifestations rather than tangible deities. That is to say, they are symbols of the extremes of humanity: good and evil.

The struggle between the higher and lower selves of humanity, according to the Koranic questions, met its crescendo with the death and resurrection of Jesus.⁵⁶⁶ For the Moors, the crucifixion of the Christ only meant that the higher self had once and for all beaten the lower self.⁵⁶⁷ When Jesus gave his life, it is said he announced “It is finished,” which meant the time of Satan, the lower self, is finished. This line of thinking is very much congruent with the ideas espoused in the Holy Koran, which states Jesus was to bring in a new era of humanity, a new state of spiritual being-ness that is more in line with the will of Allah; the higher self.

Returning to the tools, the symbolism behind each of them is quite pragmatic. The square, to set human conduct on the right path; the compass, to draw a line between the wants and needs of humanity, and the hammer is used “to drive home the truth, and pound it in until it is part of every part.”⁵⁶⁸ According to Pleasant-Bey, the purpose of the hammer is to resolve the problems and issues that arise in life. As the hammer is used,

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., 66.
⁵⁶⁵ Ibid., 66.
⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., 66.
⁵⁶⁷ Ibid., 66.
⁵⁶⁸ Ibid., 10.
“each stroke represents poundings, buffetings and remembrance to the character.”\

Symbolically, this tool is used in repetition to constantly address (or hammer down) the uneven places and protruding nails. This particular tool is the tool of resolution because the problems of life are to be hammered down with the force of righteousness until they are resolved.\

One of the last tools of truth is the plane. As the hammer is used to pound down the uneven places, the plane makes smooth the rough places of one’s character. Ali states, “We use the plane to smooth the rough, uneven surface of joint and block and board that go to build the temple for truth.” The plane is another tool used when weaknesses or problems arise between a human and their creator. “As a Moor builds himself, he becomes more aware of such frailties of the ego and even those which lay dormant in the clearest of human knowledge, e.g. attachment, addictions, envy, anger, hatred, vanity, intemperance, etc... Those who desire to be themselves, upright, independent and fearless, use the plane.” It is critical for the Moors to constantly monitor their own conduct to ensure they are walking on the righteous path. If bad feelings come up against one’s family or one’s nation, they must quickly and efficiently address the problem. This is how a Moor stays on the side of Allah’s righteousness and maintains the strength of the nation.\

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570 Ibid., 417.
571 Ibid., 419.
574 Ibid., 419.
The other tools of Freemasonry discussed by Ali are useful in a variety of ways:

“The chisel, line, the plummet and the saw all have their uses in the workshop of the mind. And then the ladder with its trinity of steps, faith, hope and love; on it we climb up to the dome of purity in life. And on the twelve-step ladder, we ascend until we reach the pinnacle of that which life is spent to build the Temple of perfected man.”

Again, these tools give shape to the form and function of Moorish Science as they are meant to be used to build the Temple of Truth and the Temple of Perfected Man. Further, this temple is only to remind humanity that “ALLAH and Man are one.”

This is the essential truth of Moorish Science; human nature is indeed divine because humans are simply a manifestation of the great God Allah.

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577 Ibid., 420.

The Fez

The fez for the Moors may be their most ubiquitous symbol, but they are not the only movement to embrace this important headgear. The fez (or variations of it) can be witnessed throughout many cultures. Nance argues, “Ali and other male Moors were expected to wear a red Fez at all times, the Fez being a symbol of mystical knowledge to Masons, Shriners, and also to Moors.” The closest variation of the Moorish fez is the fez of the Shriners (pictured below). However, there are two main differences of the Moorish and Shriner fez that completely set them apart from one another. First, the Moorish fez does not feature the scimitar; it is simply plain red with no additional symbols or decoration. Second, is the freedom of the tassel. Meaning, the Shriner’s fez is usually tied down on the left side (the side of righteousness for the Shriners) while the Moorish tassel is not tied down at all. It is meant to freely swing around the head of the wearer as a symbolic representation of the full three hundred and sixty degrees of knowledge that each Moor has.

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579 Ibid., 115. “As the Sombrero is to the Mexicans, as the Beret is to the French and as the brimmed hats are to the Men of Europe so the Fez is to Moorish Men. Susan B. Nance, “Moslem’s That Old Time Religion”: Moorish Science and The Meaning of Islam in the 1920s Black Chicago. (Simon Fraser University, 1996), 85. While the fez is the most popular headdress for the Moors, it is not the only head wear they adorn. They also wear turbans, and “King Tut-style” head gear.


The fez of the Moors is symbolically rich for a number of reasons. For example, the fez with the tassel down is formally symbolic of the chalice (a cup) meant to be filled with the knowledge of righteousness.\footnote{582} Worn on the head (a capstone), with the tassel in the air, it is a symbol of the knowledge that has been acquired by the individual wearer.\footnote{584} Meaning, like the mortarboard of a college graduate, the fez symbolized knowledge that has been acquired.\footnote{585} In Freemasonry, the chalice and capstone, the two forms of the fez, are quite symbolic. Like the Star of David, there is a duality to the meaning of the fez that connects one to the other. The chalice represents a cup, an object that receives substance or information.\footnote{586} And the capstone represents completion; "To bring the [capstone] forth, therefore, and to place it in its destined position, is significative that the


\footnote{584} Ibid., 1:09.

\footnote{585} Ibid., 1:11. Also, the fez symbolizes "our crown chakra or God self," which is the highest spiritual state attainable by human beings.

\footnote{586} Albert Gallatin Mackey, Edward L. Hawkins, and William James Hughan. An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and Its Kindred Sciences, Comprising the Whole Range of Arts, Sciences and Literature As Connected with the Institution, (New York: Masonic History Co, 1912), 141.
building is completed, which event is celebrated, even by the Operative Masons of the present day, with great signs of rejoicing. In this the capstone and chalice form a cohesive pair. That is to say, information is poured into the chalice (the head) until it is full or until learning is complete, then the capstone i.e., the fez is placed on the head to signify the candidate’s learning is complete.

In the Moorish view, Freemasons use the Fez for a very problematic reason. Pleasant-Bey states, “Nearly all secret societies don the head dress of their conquered namesake, e.g. Moose’s head, Elk’s heads, Bull’s head and the Mason’s wear the African head dress (the Fez)” as a sign of conquest. According to the Moors, the Freemasons have conquered African people by taking their knowledge and claiming it as their own, and the Fez is evidence of that. Therefore, the Fez is also an object of reclamation for the Moors, in that, by wearing the fez in their daily lives they are reclaiming it as part of their divine status.

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587 Ibid., 132.
588 Video Recording: “Variation of the Moorish Fez” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vXZ3hnrMmw (accessed October, 2011). In this recording the speaker connects the fez to the Mortar Board that is given to graduates. In this fashion the head covering means the exact same thing. After the chalice or head of the college student has been filled it is capped with the Mortar Board to signify it is full of knowledge and therefore the students education is complete and s/he are ready to graduate.
Further, the fez for the Moors is connected to ancient Kemet (Egypt), as it symbolizes the capstone of the great pyramid.\textsuperscript{591} Connecting themselves to ancient Kemet, the Moors argue the fez can be seen on the heads of the great thinkers of that civilization. Particularly, Pharaoh Khufu, builder of the great Pyramid, can be seen wearing a fez in many of his effigies.\textsuperscript{592} Again, for the Moors this only proves their ancient ancestry and demonstrates their connectedness to ancient African civilizations. Moreover, this headgear goes beyond the shores of Africa, to other civilizations, such as those of Asia and South America.\textsuperscript{593} The oldest representations of the fez, according to the Moors, can be seen on the heads of the colossal statues of Easter Island.\textsuperscript{594}

\textsuperscript{593} Ibid., 2:50.
\textsuperscript{594} Ibid., 3mins.
Robert Dannin in the text *Black Pilgrimage to Islam* argues, "the trail of the red fez links the slave rebellions of Latin America to the United States by the agency of

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Black seafarers, usually former slaves but also free men, who played an important historical role in transmitting politically subversive information among members of the African Diaspora. For him, this is evidence of the path Freemasonry has taken through the African community. More to the point, the fez for Dannin is a method of cultural cohesion on the part of African Americans as it was most popular with African seafarers. According to Dannin, the fez connects Africans in the Americas and has survived to the present day through the MSTA. But there is no evidence proving the Moors are the originators of that headdress. It is more likely the fez is another symbol Ali found useful, because it connects him and Black people in America to the ancient East. Wearing a turban is normative in Islamic culture, so it makes sense that Ali found the fez to be a useful symbol.

For Nance, the donning of the headgear and other forms of attire was a way to authenticate the Moors’ historical and cultural claims. She states: “somehow Ali and his followers had managed to translate their Moroccan-style garb and names into symbols of authenticity by drawing on the popular conceptions of black history and fraternal parade representations of it, combined with Ali’s apparent pull in Chicago political circles.” The fez for the Moors is a symbol of their ubiquitous presence on the planet. Any headdress resembling the fez of the Moors is automatically counted a part of the Moorish nation. As mentioned earlier, some Moors will go so far as to claim that the headgear on

\footnote{Robert Dannin, Black Pilgrimage to Islam. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 18.}

\footnote{Susan B. Nance, “Moslem’s That Old Time Religion”: Moorish Science and The Meaning of Islam in the 1920s Black Chicago. (Toronto: Simon Fraser University, 1996), 86.}
the Eastern Island statues is evidence of Moorish culture, without making any kind of organic link. To them, the Fez is enough evidence of their ancient origins.

Moorish attire (beyond the fez) is also very unique, but again this uniqueness shares a connection to the craft of Freemasonry. Particularly, Moorish attire most closely resembles the garb worn by those of the Mystic Shrine, or Shriners. In both organizations there is a motif of “Arab” wares. However, for the Moors the wearing of “Arab” attire is not just ceremonial or ritualistic, it is an expression that is maintained on a day-to-day basis. Further, the Moors would argue, the turbans and robes they wear are not Arab at all but examples of the clothing of their ancient ancestors. Nance argues, the Moors resembled “Shriners as they appeared in parades,” but on the more elaborate side, “Ali and many other Moors dressed in pseudo-Arab garb which mirrored that worn by ‘Hindoo’ doctors, the King of Zanzibar or the other African and Asian heads of state (see photo below).”

599 Ibid., 133.
To contend with Nance, it is not clear what makes Moorish garb as it were (or is) pseudo, because (in effect) it would be very difficult to argue the Moors did not believe in what they say, do, or wear. It is very clear the Moors pulled from a variety of sources to create the complete structure of their belief system. Yet, this strengthens the point that the Moors were in-tune with their social and political surroundings. This makes Moorish culture a unique product of not only 1920s Chicago culture, but early 20th century global culture as well. They are a solid example of the impact global culture has on the urban migrants of the United States.

To provide more context for this conversation, symbolically the Black church has also been a bastion of unique expression that defines the spiritual relationship between the divine and humanity. Anthony Pinn, in the text *Terror and Triumph*, argues there are specific ways the Black body is adorned and used. He states, “...in the Black church, clothing was not a sign of one’s value for others as their objects; rather, it was a sign of

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one's value for oneself, one's community and one's God. Put another way, clothing did not symbolize why whites were in power; rather it debunked long accepted rationales for white superiority. It was a sign of personhood and self-worth." Specifically, Pinn is referring to the hats or headwear Black women don during church service week after week.

Fashionable headgear was and is a status of liberation from enslavement. As enslaved African women covered their heads with rags and worn cloths, the elaborate hats made notable in the COGIC tradition are a symbol of free expression and control over one's body. Adornment of the Black body that was deemed ugly and soiled by American society was carefully covered in the most beautiful (and affordable) clothing to express to the world the importance of that body. The fact that this adornment was used for attendance of "God's" house means that concern for the appearance of the body was a divine process that was not to be taken lightly. The Moorish fez can also be interpreted in a similar manner, in that it is a way to adorn the Black body to demonstrate its connection to Allah.

Pinn argues, dress or attire is an expression of "...a black aesthetic of liberation, the donning of certain clothing with accompanying ideals and attitudes – black Christians give expression to their humanity, to a liberated identity, through the compromise of oppressive social boundaries and their supporting ideologies of white superiority."
The Black aesthetic of liberation is both a personal and social expression that claims the Black body is not just for labor, but can be beautifully adorned and presented to the divine. This pattern also seems to be the case for the Moors as body adornment is an integral element of the philosophy of the Ali’s movement. To be a Moor, one had to dress as one.

**Masonic Terminology**

There are some terms that also connect Freemasonry to the MSTA (outside of the tool terminology), such as the word “Sovereign.” For the Moors, this term is synonymous with National or Moorish American National (discussed in Chapter Two). For them, the term means simply that the person in question is aware of their nationality as Moorish and therefore they are “Sovereign.” In Freemasonry, the term speaks to a certain degree of knowledge in the craft. Sovereign is an “epithet applied to certain degrees which were invested with supreme power over inferior ones.” Similarly, for the Moors, to be a Sovereign means one has knowledge that may make them superior to a “non-Moorish” person who is ignorant of their true self. Further, this may also endow said Moor with a

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604 Maulana Karenga, *Introduction to Black Studies* (Los Angeles: University of Sankore Press, 2010), 362. Black aesthetic is defined “as a distinctive mode of artistic expression and a distinctive standard by which Black art can be identified and judged in terms of its creativity and beauty as well as social relevance.” I wanted to include this definition to provide more strength to Pinn’s understanding of the Black aesthetic, whereas Pinn’s argument that clothing in the Black church also carries with it “accompanying ideals and attitudes,” Karenga’s definition that the Black aesthetic is expression that is creative as well as socially relevant. As the Black church is a microchasm of the larger population of Africans in America, clothing becomes very relevant within social milieu of the Black church as well as a creatively beautiful expression.


606 Ibid., 701.
certain level of power (or at least perceived power) that others may not possess, such as the power to “stand on your square” in court, for instance and use that knowledge to get out of a legal bind.

This may be just perceived power, as there are examples of this not working for those who claim Moorish ancestry. However, this perception to the perceiver is power they have never felt before. For example, those who claim to be Moors have been known to go to court and use knowledge of their ancestry as a way to get out of legal trouble. Regardless if this works or not, it is an expression of perceived power, which speaks to power the Moors believe they have through their belief system. Simply put, this is the power of the Treaty of Friendship negotiated by Morocco and the United States over two centuries ago. And by this treaty, the Moors believe they deserve a certain conversation with the representative government of the United States. Therefore, the Moors believe being “Sovereign” entitles them to be above United States jurisdictional law.

“Old Time Religion” is also a very important term for the MSTA because it speaks to their ancient origins. In the Moorish catechism, questions eighteen and nineteen ask about the nature of the Moorish religion:

Q. What is our Religion?
A. Islamism.
Q. Is that the new or old time Religion?
A. Old Time Religion. (Questions for Moorish Children).

What does that mean for the Moors? Pleasant-Bey states: “the origin of Islamism, not Islam, means the Science or the Adept philosophy of Peace. [Ali] taught the Moors the

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religious ways of their Ancient Forefathers.\footnote{Elihu Pleasant-Bey, \textit{Exhuming a Nation: Biography of Nobel Drew Ali} (Memphis: Seven Seal Publication, 2004), 340.} To put it another way, Moorish culture is the “old time religion.” It is the religion of the Christ that was translated into Arabic by the Prophet Mohammed. It is the religion of the Buddha and the religion of the ancient Kemetic Adepts. The mysteries of Kemet are the "old time religion"\footnote{Jose Pimienta-Bey, \textit{Othello's Children in the "New World": Moorish History & Identity In The African American Experience} (Bloomington: 1\textsuperscript{st} Books Library, 2002), 25} because the mystery system represents civilized man’s earliest recorded understanding of God or the Divine.\footnote{Ibid. In ancient Kemet, man’s uniting with his God, through concentrated thought and remembrance, was the utmost foundation to events of life! The unseen Great Spirit was seen in all things, especially man himself: This action was recognizing the Force of Light and Sound as the Omnipotent Giver of Life and the acceptance of that life in human mud (body of flesh). Hence, the definition of The Old Time African Religion is LAW - Universal Law in Harmony with the Self. Simple. Drew Ali called this law, "Islamism". He taught The Moors "Islamism is the name of their Religion". Their Ancient forefathers called it, “The Egyptian Mystery System”. The bases of Catholicism and her multi-denomination Children is founded upon the premise of serving a visible trinity of Gods which exist outside, not within, man.} For Freemasons, this “is a phrase frequently encountered among mystical secret societies, and sometimes found among political ones, especially German political societies, which seem often to have had a mystical bent. It can signify almost any pre-Christian survival in a Christian country, or those forms of Christianity embraced by Heretics or believers in Gnosticism, or virtually whatever the user means to import from some other tradition or to make up from whole cloth.”\footnote{Alan Axelrod, \textit{The International Encyclopedia of Secret Societies & Fraternal Order} (Née York: Facts On File, Inc., 1997), 188.} An example of such a Gnostic religion would be the Wiccan tradition.\footnote{Ibid., 188.} Moreover, in the strictly technical sense of the above definition, and if we take the Moors at their word, their tradition would definitely
qualify as a pre-Christian Gnostic tradition. Pleasant-Bey remarks, “All Asiatic nations rooted in Africa have divine origin,”\textsuperscript{614} and this divine origin is the foundation of "old time religion." So there is some connection with how the Moors understand their religion and the way the Freemasons understand Gnosticism. Does that make the MSTA an ancient Gnostic religion in the modern day? Possibly. However, more importantly, the concept of “old time religion” for the Moors means there is something to be said about pre-Christian spiritual traditions that are not based in so-called traditional European philosophy.

The term and concept of “the grip” and the use of hands is very significant for the craft of Freemasonry and the Moors.\textsuperscript{615} “In Freemasonry, the hand as a symbol holds a high place, because it is the principal seat of the sense of feeling so necessary to and so highly revered by Masons.”\textsuperscript{616} Similarly, for the Moors the hand represents the duality of existence because it “can hold with the delicacy of a feather or the power of a death grip at the will of the user.”\textsuperscript{617} Therefore, humans must exercise great sensitivity with their hands.

More importantly however, are signs and symbols that can be carried out with the hands. In the esoteric community, this covers everything from gestures to body

\textsuperscript{614} Elihu Pleasant-Bey, \textit{Exhuming a Nation: Biography of Nobel Drew Ali} (Memphis: Seven Seal Publication, 2004), 341.


\textsuperscript{616} Ibid., 317.

\textsuperscript{617} Elihu Pleasant-Bey, \textit{Exhuming a Nation: Biography of Nobel Drew Ali} (Memphis: Seven Seal Publication, 2004), 95.
placement to a specific grip or meaningful clasping of hands. In *An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and Its Kindred Sciences, Comprising the Whole Range of Arts, Sciences and Literature As Connected with the Institution* it is stated: “to the Mason, the hand is most important as the symbol of that mystical intelligence by which one Mason know another ‘in the dark as well as in the light.’” Meaning, Freemasons know others of the craft by the way they grip each other’s hands, which can be done in darkness or in light because again, the sensitivity of the uniting of hands and the way those hands unite are all the Masons need to know each other. Referring to the legend of Hiram Abiff, it is this knowledge of hand-grips that all Masons must keep safe because knowledge of the grip opens doors to knowledge of the craft.

![Figure 12: Grips of Freemasonry](image)

For the Moors, “the human hand is symbolic of the mind because of its abilities to grasp and retain.” But “the grip” is a conceptual term, not just physical action.

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619 Ibid., 317.

Conceptually, it is the ability to grasp or have a grip on knowledge that allows humans to understand who they are and make themselves better. According to Pleasant-Bey, the prophets: “Abraham, Solomon, Jesus, Mohammed and lastly Noble Drew Ali can only use the saving powers of the grip.”623 The grip that saves is called Master Grip and according to Pleasant-Bey, this is the grip the Freemasons boast to have for the betterment of humanity, but instead it is used for misinformation and manipulation.624 As a concept, this is the “grip” of the sacred knowledge that is meant to free humanity. To explain, the sacred knowledge of the Moors, the knowledge of humanity's divine nature, the knowledge that the Moors claim was stolen by the Freemason and suppressed by the world’s religions, is the grip Ali is using to lift a humanity that has fallen.

Some Problems

George G. M. James’ text Stolen Legacy moves from the founding ideal that European religion, wisdom and understandings come from stolen Egyptian (Kemetic) works through invasion, manipulation and theft.625 This understanding is congruent with the MSTAs’s claim that European Freemasonry is a key element of global white supremacy

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622 Also note that the physical grip is pictured on the Moorish identification card, but there is not evidence they usual an actually secret handshake.
624 Ibid., 101.
that must be exposed. More to the point, this is a problem of secrecy for the Moors. The issue of secrecy is a problem of mistrust, which combined with the idea that Freemasons may have far-reaching influence in the upper echelons of politics and society makes for a highly problematic scenario.

Secrecy, according to Anita Kelly author of *The Psychology of Secrets*, means the deliberate hiding of information from other people. The focus of this text is primarily on the individual dynamics of secret keeping rather than group dynamics. However, the underlying reason for secrets may reveal important elements of secret keeping for secret organizations. For example, the author argues the crux of the issue of keeping a secret lies in the question, who is a secret being kept from? The answer to this query reveals why the secret is being kept.

There are different types of information non-disclosure, such as privacy, repression and lying, but secrecy is unique because it is active concealment of information to which others may or may not have a claim. So, in the case of secret societies, who claim privacy, their methods “may be considered secret rather than private, because members of those sects are aware that the broader society does not necessarily expect such rituals to be confidential.” An example of this may be a member of a society keeping his/her membership secret, or not volunteering information about their

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627 Ibid., 3.
628 Ibid., 4. Shriner’s Secrecy: http://www.beashrinernow.com/en/About/Shriners/AboutShriners.aspx (accessed February, 2012). The Shriners claim: “Throughout history both the Freemasons and Shriners have had a reputation for secrecy, but our mission is straightforward.”
629 Ibid., 4.
membership. Another could be rituals and/or handshakes of secret organizations that are publicly known and sometimes publicly performed but remain secret to the uninitiated.

One of the benefits of secret societies is that they are organizations where men (and some women) are able to meet on equal ground without the burdens of their public lives, be it their religious affiliation, social status, political connection or economic standing. This may be the reason the worse is assumed when it comes to secret organizations because through this method of nepotism individuals can easily play one side against the other. In simpler terms, it creates a conflict of interest. This reveals the type of problem Pleasant-Bey made reference to when discussing the story of Abiff, in that, Freemasonry is organized to control information, particularly information concerning the divine nature of African people in the Americas. He argues, Freemasonry is a type of nationalism that “gave birth to the flux of modern day American racism, apartheid, segregation and discrimination.” Moreover, for the Moors, secrets are “what spreads this disease” of racism and hatred for African people in the world.

631 Ibid., 239. “Freemasonry was one institution that contributed to the development of these [Atlantic] intracultural connections in the British Empire. By creating a global network that had both practical functions and ideological dimensions, Freemasonry play a critical role in building, consolidating and perpetuating the empire. A look at Freemasonry in the context of the empire as a whole reveals the mechanisms of Freemasonry’s spread abroad, the global scope of its network, and the range of service it offered to helped its members handle the rigors of life overseas.”
633 Ibid., 107.
634 Ibid., 107.
However, there are problems with this, as there is a rich history of secret societies in African and African American culture, particularly Prince Hall Freemasonry. The history of African American fraternal organizations is rich, complex and mirrors the political and religious growth of American society.\(^{635}\) As the United States matured through the American Revolution, African Americans began to be initiated into European American fraternities. Joe Williams Trotter, author of “African American Fraternal Associations in American History: An Introduction” states:

The growth of black fraternal associations is closely intertwined with the larger history of voluntary associations in American society. In the aftermath of the American Revolution, compared to its European counterparts, the United States soon gained a reputation as ‘a nation of joiners.’\(^{636}\)

Just as with most other aspects of American society (particularly politics and religion), Africans were marginally integrated. However, the era of the American Revolution presented the opportunity for African inclusion into European societies.\(^{637}\)

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\(^{635}\) Edward Nelson Palmer. “Negro Secret Societies.” *Social Forces*, 23 (1944): 207-212. The author further divides West African secret societies into three categories: The Islamic Societies, which include: Sirri, Javia Kartas, Qairowan, Masubori, Mor: Mumbo-Jumbo (Mahammah-Jamboh), Kongkorong, and Bori. The Pagan: Poro (Sierra Leone); Egbo (Nigeria); Bundu (Sierra Leone); Dyoro (Irony Coast); Nkimba Nkamba (Congo); Mungi (Cameroon); Butwa (Angola); Ogoni, Orisha and Ekuwu (Nigeria); Ampora (Sierra Leone); and Nkanda (Congo). And the Pan-Islamic: Dou (Senegal); Afa (Dahomey); Belli-Paaro and Boviowah (Liberia); Katahwa and Naferi (Senegal); Sindongo (Congo); Kwaga (Bornu); and Jamboi, Sembe and Nanam (Sierra Leone and Liberia). Alex Axelrod, *The International Encyclopedia of Secret Societies and Fraternal Orders* (Facts of Life, Inc.; New York, 1997), 245-255.


\(^{637}\) Ariane Liazos and Marshall Ganz, “Duty to the Race: African American Fraternal Orders and the Legal Defense of the Right to Organize.” *Social Science History*, 28 (2004): 491. “White fraternal orders challenged the legal status of black parallel orders through both civil and criminal means. In civil law they opposed the black orders based on what they argued were attempts by blacks to “defraud” the public into thinking the orders were one and the same. They grounded this assertion in two ways.
For Africans in America, the formal practice of secret organizations began with Prince Hall Affiliate Freemasonry (PHA). The practice of Freemasonry has been an intimate part of African American religious traditions since the founding of PHA. For the Moors, Prince Hall “was freed to be accepted as a ‘Negro Mason,’” but he was just a pawn used by European Freemasons who were trying to further mentally enslave

Often they cited the common-law doctrine that one business had the right to sue another if the latter copied the name or other relevant features from the former to steal its customers. If the plaintiff could prove possible damages in the form of a loss of business, the courts would enjoin the defendant from using the name in question. Alternatively, if a specific act concerning the incorporations of civic groups existed, the white orders could sue on a statutory basis. Thus, in civil law, legal challenges often began when a white group, often already incorporated appealed to the courts for an injunction against a black parallel order to prevent it from copying the name rituals emblems and so forth of the white organization or from obtaining a charter itself. In criminal law, white fraternal leaders attacked the parallel orders by securing the enactment of state-level trademark legislation that would deny African American groups the right to use the names and other prominent features of the white orders. These laws passed by state legislatures and ratified by governors, applied to individuals rather than organizations. While civil actions claiming fraud allowed white groups to enjoining black groups from using their names, trademark laws were part of state penal codes, permitting the misdemeanor arrest of individuals for using the names emblems, slogans, titles of officers, rituals, pins, buttons, rosettes, insignia, and even colors of fraternal associations to which they did not belong.”


African people by making them believe that Freemasonry was a European invention.\textsuperscript{641} This, in effect, means Prince Hall was initiated to keep the secret of Hiram Abiff from African people.\textsuperscript{642}

Pleasant-Bey argues, most Black Freemasons “are completely ignorant as to why they are ‘Freemason.’”\textsuperscript{643} Again, this is a matter of knowing one’s name or status. Pleasant-Bey states, “although the first Lodge No. 459 was known as the first African lodge with Prince Hall as Master, the fact they were forced to retain ‘Slave Names’ sustained their place as ‘Property’ to this day.”\textsuperscript{644} Black Masons, and their founder Prince Hall, did not know who they were as free nationals, ancient Moors. Therefore, their craft is, like European Freemasonry, simply stolen knowledge.

In Moorish circles, if one is not a Moor, that person is an outsider, which is to be spiritually dead and therefore not in a position to receive all knowledge about Moorish Islam. For some, this can be interpreted as secrecy; but for the Moors, you are simply not ready for the information. This reveals a contradiction in their approach towards Freemasonry. Freemasons are secretive because, to them what they believe is sacred and special. This is not unique to the Freemasons, Moors or the average human being.

Moreover, to approach a Moor with concern for information about their organization can be met with a certain level of hostility\textsuperscript{645} unless one is inquiring about membership into the organization. This reveals the same problem the Moors have with Freemasons.

\textsuperscript{641} Ibid., 87.
\textsuperscript{642} Ibid., 87.
\textsuperscript{643} Ibid., 95.
\textsuperscript{644} Ibid., 95.
\textsuperscript{645} This is from personal experience, most of my efforts to get to know individual Moors was either met with silence or polite disdain.
because unless you are a member, you are not privy to all of the benefits of membership, which includes knowledge.

Again, there is no evidence Noble Drew Ali was a member of any esoteric organization, but all the symbolism and philosophy he employs from them speak to a close familiarity, or at least deep admiration. Nance argues, Ali "was attracted to the black fraternal tradition as a formal structural style for Moorish Science because its works of charity, community organization and mutual benefit defined black respectability." The problem this reveals encapsulates the entire problem of Moorish theology as the "chicken vs. the egg" conundrum. Said another way, the Moors claim to be the originators of many phenomena and ideas, yet the evidence Noble Drew Ali may have just had many diverse and unique influences is very overwhelming. The problem this leaves us with, is whether or not to take Ali at his word or to just concede he was probably at one time a member of an esoteric organization where he was exposed to certain materials, such as Unto Thee I Grant and the Aquarian Gospel. It is possible that Ali, not being satisfied with the processes and procedures of the organization(s), decided to take his teaching/learning directly to the people with whom he could have maximum impact.

**Synopsis**

As it has been demonstrated in this and previous chapters, Moorish culture "boils down" to perspective. From an academic perspective, the evidence suggests he saw value in the approach of secret societies for African American people, and therefore incorporated

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elements of them into his movement. Moreover, the Moors have their own secrets and their own way of protecting what they consider to be sacred information. Unlike the Freemasons, there is no indication that the Moors use secret handshakes or words in their movement. Ali’s concern was to get his message out to as many African Americans as possible, despite being restricted to the urban Northeast. His focus on secret societies may have been a way for him to recruit members of PHA Freemasonry, to give the movement a mystic appeal, or maybe just a way to keep the practice of his own craft. Regardless of his reasons or the Moorish claims, this will continue to be an issue of inquiry as long as they share such similarities. The fact the MSTA, as a movement, is reflective of so many other traditions: Christianity, Islam, and Freemasonry, speaks to Ali’s many influences. Ali had to be exposed to information concerning Christian Science, Islamic motif and Freemason rituals for them to appear in the movement he created.
Conclusion

When this project was first envisioned it was designed to be an ethnographic study of the Moorish Science Temple of America. This study was to include visits to particular temples, interviews with members, and survey discussion of the Moors’ environment (i.e., what the temples look like inside and out as well as the type of neighborhood the temple is in). This, however, did not take place, as there were many impediments to those efforts. Time restrictions created a problem, but more importantly there were problems securing the trust of members of the organization. As mentioned in the introduction, this lack of trust is quite understandable. Moreover, as long as I am not a member of the organization I will always be an outsider or a "non-Sovereign," which means I am not privy to perhaps the most interesting aspects of Moorish philosophy.

Two incidents in particular come to mind in reference to my efforts to secure interviews with the Moors. First, having corresponded with one member of the organization from a Midwest temple, the conversation quickly deteriorated after a careless omission on my part. I referred to the Moorish Science Temple of America as the Moorish Science Temple omitting the necessary “of America.” I did not anticipate this omission would compromise the entire conversation, but this was the case. The Moor in question had no interest in continuing the conversation and made it clear that he was insulted by my lack of attention to the particular details of MSTA. In researching the MSTA, it is clear being American is very important in their overall theology, which means the “of America” in their title is obligatory when referencing them. This is also the case when referencing an individual Moor as Moorish American.
The second incident included an actual meeting with an individual who claimed to be a Moor in Houston, Texas. This individual was a card carrying member of the movement (freely displaying his identification card) and seemed to be very knowledgeable about the philosophy and rhetoric of the MSTA. However, quite honestly, this Moor seemed a bit too open and free with his discussion of the Moors, which led me to question the authenticity of his claim. Moreover, he did not wear a fez, which also led me to question his words and motives because, as discussed in Chapter Four, this headgear is absolutely necessary. This may seem trivial to some, but as I experienced being completely shut out of a conversation with a Moor for a careless omission, being given information so freely seemed suspect. Further, he was the only Moor in Houston I was able to make contact with. So, verifying the information he was offering would have been problematic. Moreover, to give sustained attention to Moorish philosophy would require more than just the loose conversation of one individual.

Despite my frustration with the lack of results from these efforts, it is still my aim to provide a more intimate and nuanced discussion of the MSTA that will expand the research on African American religion. Therefore, future research on the Moors will require obtaining interviews from members of the MSTA, as well as visits to temples. This may be a difficult but necessary task because the research on the MSTA requires an ethnographic approach. For interviewing members, I would like to address the following questions:

*How long have you been a member of the Temple?*

*Why did you decide to become a member of this Temple?*
What religious affiliation did you have (if any) before you were a member of the Temple?

What does being a member mean to you?

These questions are designed to understand both the individual and communal nuances of Moorish membership. Particularly, the first four questions are focused on an individual's experience with the Moors. Were they born a Moor, and if not what brought them to the movement? It is hoped the answers to these questions will reveal nuances to the myriad of religious experiences of African Americans on their search for spiritual meaning. Even if an individual was born a Moor, it is likely that there would be a family story behind their membership. Further questions include:

What does Christianity mean to you?

What does Islam mean to you?

What does Masonry mean to you?

Does use of Masonic imagery and symbolism lend the MSTA to be a secret or semi-secret organization?

What does Pan-Africanism and Black Nationalism mean to you?

What is the meaning of nationhood?

Does that relate to Black Nationalism?

What does Africa mean to you?

What does Buddhism mean to you?

Hinduism?

The next set of questions is focused on the elements of Moorish Science (Islam, Christianity, Freemasonry and Nationalism) and what they mean to the individual
members. These elements are the focus of this dissertation, but what this dissertation lacks is the voices of the Moors who can give more insight into what those elements actually mean. These are questions of perspective rather than experience, designed to get insider perception of religious traditions that help make up the theology of the MST.

Since this set of questions is focused on the elements of Moorish Science, the purpose will be to gain greater clarity for what this dissertation offered. This dissertation could only offer perspective from voices that were made public through various publicized means biography, radio, internet and so on. To move this research forward, less publicized voices will be useful to provide perspective on the nuances of Moorish Science. Of particular concern are the nuances dealing with Moorish understanding of the world’s religions.

There also needs to be a more distinct discussion of the Moorish understanding of their origin. What this dissertation represents is merely scratching the surface of how the Moors understand their beginnings. The Moors see themselves as contributing to the foundation of humanity, the primordial efforts of enlightenment and culture. So, there will be of concern with ancient mythologies of human culture, i.e., the Lost City of Atlantis. The object again is to better understand how they understand themselves:

*What is Atlantis?*

*Were the Moors present in Atlantis?*

*Where was this place located?*

*What evidence do the Moors have of their presence in Atlantis?*
Are there other ancient civilizations that the Moors founded?

What were these places like?

What significance does Atlantis have for Moors in the present day?

The series of questions below are centered on the theological elements of the MSTA’s belief system. This will allow for a more complete understanding of how the Moors understand good and evil. More than that, future research on the Moors will deal more deeply with what it means for a Moor to sin. What does it mean to be blessed?

From this dissertation, these issues can be speculated upon, but it is important to get more concrete and focused answers on these matters:

What is the meaning of divinity to you?

What is the meaning of sin?

Is the divinity and evil of humans literal or symbolic?

Is the divinity of Black people inherent or earned?

Is the wickedness of white people inherent, earned or both?

There is a need to investigate the connection the Moors have to the NOI, simply because of the many similarities the organizations share. Do the Moors see white people as evil as the NOI did? Did the establishment of the NOI headquarters in Chicago cause any friction with the Moors? Is there any evidence of the MSTA and NOI working together as African American Islamic groups? And if not, why not? Are there any rivalries to speak of? This concern is not just to compare the Moors to the NOI but also to understand how the Moors see their place in the world relative to other African American religious groups. This is also to investigate more political issues relative to the
movement. While this dissertation was not concerned with these issues, future research must focus on more complex questions that deal with the intricacies of MSTA belief:

* Describe the role of Marcus Garvey for the MSTA's movement?*

* Did the MSTA participate in the Civil Rights and/or Black Power Movements?*

* What do you do for your members in terms of social services?*

* What do you do for the community in terms of social services, politics, education and artistic activities?*

Also of concern is the Moors' role during the Civil Rights/Black Power movements. This, in part, is an effort to connect the histories of the NOI and the MSTA. However, the more critical concern is centered on the Moorish role in the community they claim to represent. This is where a more sociological approach will be useful in the analysis of the Moors. The concern for this series of questions is centered on what the Moors do in their respective communities in terms of services. Are they so introverted that the communities in which they have established temples are not aware of their presence or efforts to save a "fallen humanity?" Or are they well recognized and respected? Again, this is to focus on their sociological impact in their surrounding environment.

The last set of questions is centered on the Moorish approach to leadership within their organization and the dynamics of male-female relations. Admittedly, this set of questions can be considered highly provocative as it deals with the inner workings of the MSTA. Moreover, as covered in the second chapter of this dissertation, in the section on the Holy Family, familial relations within the Temple can be a serious concern. There will be limits to how much information is provided to me as an outsider. However, even
small details can reveal interesting information and connections that can help provide perspective on the movement:

Does body adornment of members of the MSTA have symbolic importance?

Are their specific modes of dress for women and are they different for men and why?

What foods and drinks are taboo, and why?

Do they have their own grocers as many other Muslim movements in the United States do?

What is taboo for male attire? Female attire?

What about male/female relations and sexual codes?

Does the organization operate any shops, farms, and/or schools?

What is the focus of the current given leaders? Membership, finance, community out-reach?

Is the leadership composed of elders and/or men?

Does this make it difficult for younger members or women to occupy leadership positions?

How long is leadership usually held within the temple of question?

What are the chronological mandates for holding leadership and are these mandates constitutionally or traditionally bound?

Research on the MSTA would also benefit from investigation into the daily issues and concerns that arise for members. This can concern anything from diet, to how one dresses one’s body, to the type of medical care one is able to accept. Gathering from the evidence in this dissertation, a Moor’s physical body is a holy temple that requires a
certain amount of attention. So, how do Moors negotiate the United States cultural terrain that may or may not see value in Moorish bodies? As well, how do they navigate this terrain with certain issues of the body relative to each other, such as sex and sexuality.

Other avenues of exploration also take into consideration the establishment of Moorish businesses in the present day and other institutions of learning, worship and entertainment. The results of the research for this dissertation did not reveal much in the way of current fiduciary, pedagogical and social efforts, save for what is witnessed in the *Moorish American Voice*. However, there are Moorish institutions that deserve academic attention. For instance, the UMSTA or the University of the Moorish Science Temple of America is a relatively recent Moorish manifestation that can provide clarity for the overall cultural scope of the organization.\textsuperscript{647} This University, founded in 2006, is a private institution for the teaching and learning of Moorish Science. Perhaps this institution bears some resemblance to the Muhammad University of Islam founded by Elijah Muhammad decades ago?

An ethnographic investigation of the MSTA would also produce insight into the leadership of the organization. In regards to leadership, the concern would be the proverbial face of leadership. That is to ask, what do Moorish leaders look like? Male or female, young or old? Also, how is leadership passed from one person to the next? And what does it take to qualify for leadership? (Of concern will also be the MSTA’s attention to independent researchers. Individuals such as Alim Bey or Sister R. V. Bey,

referenced in this dissertation, teach Moorish Science seemingly independent of a particular Temple.) What is the process one must go through to be able to proclaim Moorish Science to an audience?

Investigation into the nuances of Moorish Science will further demonstrate the uniqueness of African cultural development in the New World. Each religious tradition that manifests itself as a result of New World experiences provides greater insight into the ability of humans to adapt to the absurdities of life. These questions are not the limit of the future research on the MSTA, as there is a very large pool of information to explore. The research that will be conducted on the MSTA will help to fill some of the holes in the current research on African American Islam.

The majority of this dissertation is focused on the organization Ali developed in the 1920s. However, there is much more to be said about the Moors since Ali’s death. There are a number of questions that are pertinent. For instance, how did the MSTA deal with the death of Ali? What can be said about the leadership of the Moors after Ali? Did the rise of the NOI cause the membership of the MSTA to dwindle at all? How did the changing social make-up of the United States contribute or hinder the growth and development of the MSTA? Also, investigation into the MSTA must take into consideration how Moorish publications have changed over the years. For instance, the *Moorish Guide* was replaced by the *Moorish American Voice*. When did this change occur and why? Are there any gaps in their pattern of publication and what can account for those gaps?
There is also something to be said about the impact of the Moors on Chicago after the passing of Ali. For instance, Jeff Fort, leader of the Black "P" Stone Rangers (a Chicago street organization), converted his group to Moorish Islam (El Ruk’n Moors) upon his release from prison in the late 1970s. Why would Moorish Islam appeal to Jeff Fort and the urban youth of Chicago? Was this a religious tradition that he was familiar with as a child growing up in Chicago? And if so, what does this say about the MSTAs’ presence in Chicago and its’ impact on both the Black and White residents of the city?

There are also relevant questions of the MSTAs’ cultural development. For instance, how is Hip Hop music used within the ranks of the MSTAs? On blogtalkradio, MSTA recordings feature young members using Hip Hop as a vehicle to push the message of Noble Drew Ali. Further on this point, how has technology contributed to the development of the movement? The internet has opened the door for many people to make themselves more public. This is definitely the case for the Moors, as they frequently use blogtalkradio and youtube to get Ali’s message to the masses. As a matter of fact, this dissertation has greatly benefited from such source material as it helped to provide necessary context and voices that may not have been heard otherwise. This is not just true for the Moors but for other African American Islamic groups, like the NOI and Nation of Gods and Earths (NGE).

Further research on the MSTAs should also include more in-depth investigation into Moorish artifacts (beyond those discussed in this dissertation) the Holy Koran and

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648 The P is in quotes because there is an issue to what it may stand for: Prince or Power.
649 Blogtalkradio: February 21, 2011 -
the Fez. Additional work would include attention to items such as the Moorish Temples. Ammerman et al., argue the place of worship “is perhaps the most obvious of the congregation’s artifacts speaking silently about the congregation’s patterns of activities and its values.” What do their buildings look like? Further, what about Moorish homes? Do members share similar motifs and decorations in their homes (pictures of Ali, Moorish art, and so on)? Again, this research will require a more intimate connection to the Moors than this dissertation was able to muster.

Even with all the academic ground to cover, this dissertation has chiseled away at some of the mysteries of the MSTA. This work is an effort shed light on an organization that has repeatedly been glossed over. Moors have created ways of being that are unique, rich and complex. It has also been demonstrated that Noble Drew Ali was a man of his time, and of his people - using symbolism, mythology and signification to recreate African Americans as Moorish Americans. This dissertation is but one step towards a new understanding of African American Islam. It is my hope the academy will take a more serious look into the Moors as well as the groups that succeeded this organization.

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651 Personal interviews will also be an important tool to get contemporary understandings of Moorish self-signification.
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